FOR MAN AND COUNTRY

Atheist Chaplains in the US Army?

Valeria R. Van Dress, Major, Chaplain

US Army Command and General Staff College Press
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The Chaplain Corps' official motto is "Pro Deo Et Patria" (For God and Country). The motto on this cover, "No Deo At Patria?" is translated as "No God, Yet Country?"

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Foreword

More than two centuries ago George Washington wanted to ensure clergy were present to meet the religious needs of his soldiers. Thus the chaplaincy in America was born. Over the ensuing years the US Army has gone to battle a multitude of times, and the chaplain was always there.

The Army of today has evolved into something far beyond that ever conceived by General Washington, as has its chaplaincy. I doubt that he ever envisioned the wide variety of activities chaplains of the future would undertake, nor would he have guessed the diversity of religious needs that soldiers of the future would present. But Washington would recognize one thing that has not changed: the chaplain present with the troops, providing for their religious needs.

But is this still the primary mission of chaplains: to provide religious support for soldiers? With the changing landscape of belief systems and spiritual stances, should the chaplaincy evolve to support a wider audience, or is the original mission still valid?

This is a very difficult and complicated question and will not be resolved any time soon.

This monograph is an excellent beginning for the discussion. Well-balanced, considerate and respectful, Chaplain Val Van Dress presents many of the legal and constitutional issues as well as the theological and philosophical debate between parties with different views on the issues. She has engaged people who represent a wide variety of viewpoints: both military and civilian, some with strong Theistic faith backgrounds, others who would characterize themselves as Humanist or Atheist. All of these voices are unique, and must be heard.

It is my hope that after reading this, others will be encouraged to add their voices to the discussion, for this discussion is essential as the chaplaincy finds its way into the future.

Chaplain (Colonel) Barbara Sherer
Chaplain, Combined Arms Center

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Acronyms

AFCB	Armed Forces Chaplains Board
CHBOLC	Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course
CLRCR	Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
CMRP	Command Master Religious Plan
CSF2	Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness
DFGL	Distinctive Faith Group Leader (obsolete as of 23 July 2015)
DRGL	Distinctive Religious Group Leader
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense Directive
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
GAT	Global Assessment Tool
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
IMCOM	Installation Management Command
MAAF	Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers
NRLSL	Non-Religious Life Stance Leader
NTLS	Non-Theistic Life Stance
NRP	No Religious Preference
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
RMP	Religious Ministry Professional
RSP	Religious Support Plan
USC	United States Code

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Chapter 1
Why Would Atheists Want to be Chaplains?

It may seem antithetical to consider the prospect of atheist Army chaplains, but support continues to grow in the atheist, agnostic, and humanist populations for non-theistic military chaplains. In 2014, the US Navy rejected an atheist applicant from becoming the Navy's first Humanist chaplain. After being turned down, Jason Heap filed a lawsuit with the Department of Defense (DoD), claiming discrimination because of his beliefs as a Humanist.[1] The case is still pending before the United States District Court.[2] Humanism is not the only non-theistic movement claiming its place among religion. An essay by Roger Scruton on Heritage.org claims that traditional religion in Europe is being replaced by an inherently foundationless quasi-religion of human rights.[3] In this regard, Humanism and human rights have much in common. One difference, at least for now, is that no one who professes "human rights" as a religion is trying to become a military chaplain in the United States.

This push for non-theistic chaplains is not happening exclusively in the Navy. A population of atheistic Humanists wants the Army to appoint Humanist Chaplains in the US Army Chaplain Corps as well. They claim this non-theistic group should have the opportunity to serve and be served by chaplains who share their beliefs.

Currently, this group of Humanists feels they will not be accorded equal support and benefits from the Chaplain Corps until they have their own chaplain representation. These benefits include receiving assistance in building community and developing values. They want the opportunity for Soldiers to participate in life cycle ceremonial events and receive confidential counseling from someone who shares a similar life stance system of beliefs. Presently, all Soldiers have the opportunity to receive non-religious counseling through Behavioral Health, but these visits are recorded in official military records and do not hold the same level of confidentiality as when visiting a chaplain. Humanists would like to assemble for "services" and enjoy refreshments and fellowship afterward, but the Chaplaincy only offers this opportunity to religious groups. Moreover, it is not clear whether the DoD considers Humanism a religion, even though the Army approved Humanism as a religious "preference code" for official military records in April 2014. This study will examine whether or not the US Army should start appointing such Humanist chaplains and subsequently offer this population the same benefits afforded to theistic religious groups.

The terms "Humanist" and "humanist" have variant definitions making it somewhat difficult to discuss the issue with common understanding. These terms will be defined in greater detail in the next chapter. For clarification, the Humanists (with a capital 'H') referenced in this book have an atheistic worldview that is neither supernatural, metaphysical, nor includes a divine being; hence, the discussion of "atheist" chaplains. However, it is important to note that not all who refer to themselves as humanists are atheists (some are Christian, Jewish, agnostic, etc.). Ergo, for the purpose of delineating this particular group of non-theistic humanists, they will be referred to as Non-Theistic Life Stance (NTLS) Humanists or simply Humanists with a capital 'H' throughout this book. NTLS Humanist chaplains are active throughout the world, serving in such places as the Dutch Armed Forces and also American universities – to include Harvard and Stanford.

Because the available literature on the subject of atheist chaplains was limited, I researched this topic by conducting dialogical interviews with six Humanists and six Army chaplains. The ongoing interviews took place in the fall and winter of 2012 as I worked on this project, which began as a thesis prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Military Art and Science degree at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

To provide the most comprehensive view of the issue, interviewees were selected based upon their understanding of the topic. Each participant agreed to the terms of the Consent and Use Agreement for Interview Materials (see Appendix A).

The following humanists participated in the interviews:

1. Jason Torpy, President of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, and also the military chaplain endorsing agent for the Humanist Society; West Point graduate, Iraq War veteran, and former Army Captain.

2. Tom Flynn, Executive Director for the Council for Secular Humanism; Editor for the *Free Inquiry* magazine; and Executive Producer for *American Freethought*.

3. Chaplain Greg Epstein, Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University and Executive Director of the humanist community serving the Harvard and surrounding communities; ordained as a Humanist Rabbi from the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism.

4. Jason Heap, Humanist Celebrant endorsed by the Humanist Society; Humanist applicant for the US Navy Chaplaincy.

5. Major Ray Bradley, Secular Humanist Distinctive Faith Group Leader applicant for the US Army.

6. Lt. Col. Erwin Kamp, Humanist Chaplain in the Dutch Navy who also served in the Royal Dutch Marines; serves presently as the Dutch equivalent for the National Director for chaplains of the Dutch Veterans Administration.

The following chaplains also participated in the interviews:

1. Chaplain (COL) Ronald Thomas, former Command Chaplain for the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

2. Chaplain (COL) John Read, Command Chaplain for the Southern Regional Medical Command; served as Director for the Center for World Religions at the United States Army Chaplain Center and School May 2012 to September 2013; also served as the Senior Chaplain for the Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq from December 2011 to May 2012.

3. Chaplain (LTC) Doyle Coffman, Deputy Command Chaplain for the Installation Management Command, Fort Sam Houston, TX.

4. Chaplain (MAJ) Seth George, World Religions Instructor at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

5. Chaplain (CPT) Jonathan Fisher, former Chaplain for the Joint Regional Correctional Facility, Fort Leavenworth, KS and facilitator of a non-religious discussion for inmates entitled, "Men of Reason."

6. Chaplain (CPT) Thomas Dyer, Army's first Buddhist Chaplain.

I personally conducted interviews with each of the participants listed above. Some responded to the questions sent ahead of time with written responses. Providing written responses gave each participant time to answer the questions thoughtfully and with greater detail. Nine out of the twelve participants responded in writing. Three humanists provided additional responses after reading the chaplain interviews.

Humanist leaders were interviewed first using the interview questions listed in Appendix B. At the end of the interview, each humanist participant was offered an opportunity to add any additional comments they thought were relevant to the discussion. All humanist interview responses were then presented to the Army chaplains prior to their respective interviews, so they would have a clear understanding of each humanist's position.

Next interviews were conducted with six active duty Army chaplains using the interview questions listed in Appendix C. The goal of the interviews was to understand their perspectives on the issue as well as their views on how the Chaplain Corps would change with the addition of NTLS Humanist chaplains. At the conclusion of each interview, as with the humanists, the chaplains had an opportunity to add any additional comments relevant to the discussion.

After transcribing all of the Army chaplain responses, they were presented to the group of humanists who were originally interviewed. They were afforded the opportunity to add any additional comments to further substantiate or clarify their positions. Rather than simply using one-sided interviews, this method offered a more dialogical approach to gain a deeper understanding of all sides of the argument. It is important to note that the argument is not between the humanist leaders and Army chaplains. Rather, there are those who oppose and support the idea of non-theistic chaplains in both groups. The complete interviews are included by permission from the humanist leaders and US Army chaplains in Appendices D and E respectively.

Humanists interviewed for this work consider NTLS Humanism as a non-theistic religion. The term "non-religious" will also be used to describe NTLS Humanism at times throughout this work, as literature researched on the subject sometimes used "non-religious" and "non-theistic" interchangeably. The term "religious" in this context connotes a sense of transcendence – meaning it is associated with something spiritual, supernatural, divine, or beyond all physical laws and independent of the material universe. Therefore "non-religious" refers to the absence of any transcendent beliefs or practices, but it is not absent of sincerely held beliefs. "Religion," which will be defined in greater detail in chapter 3, seems to be the barrier keeping Humanists out of the US Army Chaplaincy.

One of the earliest instances of a Humanist interest in the Army Chaplaincy came through a service member's request to become a secular humanist Distinctive Faith Group Leader (DFGL) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (In the past, the Army utilized DFGLs in the absence of a chaplain to provide for the religious requirements of a particular faith group.[4] The Army has since changed the title to Distinctive Religious Group Leader [DRGL].)[5] The US Army Installation Management Command (IMCOM) Chaplain's office received the request, but the service member claims he never received an official response. The current understanding as to why this applicant has not been accepted seems to lie upon the belief that "if an organizations [sic] intent and or purpose is not religious or faith-based,

then it may not reside within the purview of the chaplaincy."[6] The bottom line *appears* to be that the US Army Chaplaincy may not consider humanism as a religion, and therefore, humanist-centered activities would not fall under the purview of the Chaplaincy.

This internal memorandum from the IMCOM Chaplain's office suggested the following guidance:

> Since the request is to foster philosophy not religion, there is nothing preventing [the applicant] and other secular humanists at Fort Bragg from meeting as a Command sponsored private organization without the requirement of oversight by the Garrison Chaplain.[7]

According to this reasoning, in order to enjoy the same benefits as religious groups, a group must be identified as religious. Consequently, this interoffice correspondence was only one chaplain's opinion and was never presented to the applicant. A cursory glance at the process leads one to believe that Humanists are free to gather and discuss their beliefs after receiving a simple approval from their commander.

Therefore, if Humanist Soldiers can gather as a command-sponsored private organization without oversight from a chaplain, it appears, on the surface, that the problem is solved. A spokesperson from the group of Humanist Soldiers simply needs to request permission from a commander. Some humanists may not have a problem with that approach whatsoever. However, NTLS Humanists do not simply want a place to meet to have philosophical discussions and socialize with each other. It appears that this growing non-theistic segment of individuals desires representation and the same rights that recognized religious groups on military installations have. Namely, they would like to meet on a regular basis to discuss relevant "life stance" topics using reason and science while offering non-theistic perspectives on "life cycle events" such as weddings, funerals, baby naming ceremonies, and divorce ceremonies. Humanists believe that they should not have to be *entirely* on their own to build community and develop values, while their theistic counterparts have a paid full-time chaplain to help with similar needs. From the Humanists' perspective, the problem is not about "religion" but about ensuring that all Soldiers' core values and beliefs are accorded equal treatment.

Major Ray Bradley, the DFGL applicant referenced above, explains in an internet article on the website "The Blaze" how non-theists often feel marginalized:

> Soldiers who don't believe in God can go to war with 'Atheist' stamped on their dog tags, but humanists and others with various secular beliefs are still officially invisible in the Army. . . Humanism is a philosophy that guides a person . . . It's more than just a stamp of what you're not.[8]

People like Major Bradley want non-theistic chaplain support, and they believe that Humanist chaplains can fill this void in the military. Humanist chaplains already exist in other organizations, such as Harvard University and the Dutch Armed Forces. If these chaplains are meeting a need in the collegiate and foreign military populations, there may be a similar need in the US Army as well. Having a regular meeting place and time to discuss philosophical or life stance issues with confidentiality, as well as having like-minded people with which to discuss these issues, seems to be the primary concern. To understand the Humanists' perspective, the next chapter will discuss Humanism and how it has changed throughout history.

Notes

1.Complaint *Heap v. Hagel*, 1:14-CV-1490-JCC-TCB (E. D. Va., 5 November 2014).

2. *Heap v. Carter*, 112 F. Supp. 3d 402, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, decided 1 July 1 2015.

3. Roger Scruton, "The Future of European Civilization: Lessons for America," *The Heritage Foundation* (8 December 2015), http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/12/the-future-of-european-civilization-lessons-for-america (accessed 17 December 2015).

4. Department of the Army, Army Regulation (AR) 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2009), 16.

5. Department of the Army, Army Regulation (AR) 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2015), 12.

6. Installation Management Command Chaplain, Memorandum For: US Army Garrison, ATTN: CH (COL) David P. Hillis, Fort Bragg, NC, Subject: Exception to Policy Request for a Secular Humanist Distinguished Faith Group Leader, 27 February 2012.

7. Installation Management Command Chaplain, Memorandum, 27 February 2012.

8. Billy Hallowell, "Non-Theist Soldier Wants US Army to Officially Recognize Humanism as a 'Faith' Group," *The Blaze*, 8 February 2012, http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2012/02/08/non-theists-push-u-s-military-to-recognize-humanist-soldier-as-distinctive-faith-group-leader/ (accessed 14 October 2013).

Chapter 2
What is Humanism?

The term "humanism" has changed to encompass several definitions since the first known use of the term around the fifteenth century AD. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists five different definitions for both "humanism" and "humanist." During the Italian Renaissance, the term referred to studies in the humanities, to include languages, literature, arts, culture, and music.

Desiderius Erasmus, one of the earliest named humanists, understood humanism as an internal expression of his faith. As a competent theologian, his view of a

> new and reformed (but fully Catholic) theology involved the application of humanistic learning to biblical exegesis. This meant mastery of the source-languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek and also the patristic Latin of the first Christian centuries.[1]

He adopted humanistic methods of studying and interpreting Scripture. This method examines the full background and context of the writing, along with the most likely intended meaning by the author.[2]

At the turn of the twentieth century, the term "humanism" took on the meaning for what is listed as the fifth definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

> A Pragmatic system of thought introduced by F.C.S. Schiller and William James which emphasizes that man can only comprehend and investigate what is with the resources of the human minds, and discounts abstract theorizing; so more generally, implying that technological advance must be guided by awareness of widely understood human needs.[3]

Even today, in the twenty-first century, a vast difference between various definitions and philosophies of humanism exists to make defining the term difficult. Some groups consider the term to be void of any supernatural meaning. Other historically religious figures, such as Mother Theresa, Francis of Assisi, Erasmus and Martin Luther, considered themselves humanists.

The non-religious or non-theistic humanists are the focus of this book. However, even among the non-religious humanist groups, as with any religion of the world, beliefs range from one end of the spectrum to the other. For the most part, the groups working to endorse chaplains into the Army

are atheistic in belief. They view humanism as a "life stance" system of beliefs that uses science to understand the world without God or gods. According to the American Humanist Association (AHA),

> Humanism is a progressive life-stance that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity.[4]

This type of humanism requires individuals to create their own meaning in life and to build an ethical framework using science and reason.

The Executive Director for the Council for Secular Humanism, Tom Flynn, describes three mainstream strands of humanism in the introduction of an article entitled, "Religious Humanism: Is It Dead, Alive, or Bifurcating?" The three strands are Secular, Religious, and Congregational. The article defines each as follows:

> Secular humanists reject supernaturalism and spirituality of any type. . . Religious Humanists embrace a metaphysical or transcendent element. . . Congregational humanists. . . [are] newcomers. . . who unconditionally reject supernaturalism, yet enthusiastically embrace forms and rituals drawn from the community life of the church, synagogue, mosque, or temple.[5]

It is important to note that not all Humanists agree with Mr. Flynn's trilogy of definitions, but the definitions do provide a simplified context for the complex term.

In addition to the three strands of humanism mentioned in Flynn's article, another form is Christian humanism, which acknowledges God and the humanity of Jesus Christ. There are dozens of adjectives that precede the term "humanism," which, depending on the context, makes it difficult to define. It is important to note that because a Humanist may declare him or herself as a religious Humanist, the term "religious" does not always necessarily imply a sense of transcendence or theistic belief. Some NTLS Humanists identify as religious and some do not, hence the non-theistic identifier.

Edwin Wilson discusses various dimensions of humanism in *The Humanist Alternative,* a compilation of writings edited by Paul Kurtz. He explains that multiple, diverse Humanist associations were enrolled in the International Humanist and Ethical Union. Today there are one hundred member organizations, to include many atheist groups.[6] Various humanist groups formed this organization in Amsterdam in 1952. At that time, some

of the humanist organizations included, but were not limited to, Dutch humanists, Canadian humanists, Korean humanists, scientific humanists, psychological humanists, ethical humanists, and religious humanists. Some groups such as the Norwegian humanists did not consider their organization as religious, unlike the Dutch humanists who pressed for recognition at the same level as Catholics and Protestants.[7]

Clearly, humanism includes people who are religious, theistic, atheistic, and agnostic. If some humanists are Christian, some are Jewish, some are Hindu, some are agnostic, and some are atheists, then humanism itself is not a religion; or is it? This is the question that lies at the heart of deciding whether or not the Army should have atheist chaplains in its ranks. On a Military Association of Atheist and Freethinkers (MAAF) webpage designed specifically for chaplains, the organization clearly states, "Humanists are also atheists."[8] Since not all humanists are atheists, it is obvious that certain groups such as the MAAF have adopted this specific term to represent a particular set of beliefs. The MAAF is also the main group advocating for Humanist chaplains in the military. Therefore, to differentiate this particular atheistic group from other humanists, the label "Non-Theistic Life Stance Humanism" is the primary phrase used to designate this group explicitly for the purpose of this book. Defining this population of atheists is not the problem keeping Humanists out of the Chaplaincy. The two-pronged problem, as discussed in the next chapter, consists of identifying humanism with religion as well as the present culture of the Chaplaincy, whose motto is *Pro Deo et Patria* – For God and Country.

Notes

1. Charles Nauert, "Desiderius Erasmus," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives /win2012/entries/ erasmus (accessed 26 October 2013).

2. Nauert, "Desiderius Erasmus," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "humanism," 2nd ed., Vol 7, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 475.

4. American Humanist Association, "Definitions of Humanism," http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Definitions_of_Humanism (accessed 14 October 2013).

5. Council for Secular Humanism, http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=fi&page=flynn_33_6 (accessed 14 October 2013).

6. International Humanist Ethical Union, "About IHEU," http://iheu.org/contacts (accessed 7 December 2013).

7. Edwin H. Wilson, "Humanism's Many Dimensions," in *The Humanist Alternative*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), 16-17.

8. Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, "Chaplain Outreach," http://militaryatheists.org/chaplain/ (accessed 16 February 2014).

Chapter 3
Obstacles to the Acceptance of Non-Religious Chaplains

Two main obstacles inhibit the US Army from appointing Humanist chaplains. The first obstacle is accepting Humanism as a religion, and the second is the theistic culture of the Chaplain Corps. To understand how Humanism aligns with religion, there must first be an understanding of what religion is and what it is not. This is a debate that will not be settled any time soon, but it provides some context and a starting place at which we can begin to uncover the underlying issues.

Religion is a term with numerous definitions. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists eight definitions for the term; the first reads, "A state of life bound by monastic vows; the condition of one who is a member of a religious order, esp. in the Roman Catholic Church."[1] The sixth definition reads, "Devotion to some principle; strict fidelity or faithfulness; conscientiousness; pious affection or attachment."[2] The differences in definitions may be due to the variance in etymology. The Latin term *religionem*, or its nominative *religio*, means "respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods; conscientiousness, sense of right, moral obligation."[3] Cicero used the term *relegere*, which contains *re-* "again" and legere "read" meaning to go through or read again.[4] The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that later authors prefer the term *religàre*, which means, "to bind."[5] Later ancients such as Servius and Augustine agreed that the term referred to a bond between humans and gods, in which case the re- is intensive.[6]

The *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* suggests that the underlying etymology of the term *religio* is uncertain but agrees with the later majority that the term essentially means "to bind things together." This definition draws attention to an obvious and important aspect of religion by binding people together united by common beliefs and practices.[7] Consequently, the term "religion" can hold different meanings depending on one's preferred definition. It must also be noted that humanism of any kind is not mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*.

When used in this book, the term "religious" is defined from the term *religio* and holds an association with beliefs and practices that are sacred and involve some level of transcendence. Again, the term may legitimately be defined differently, but for the reader to understand the argument presented in this work, the term holds the aforementioned transcendent connotation when discussing "religious" and "non-religious" activities and

beliefs. The organization trying to endorse Humanist chaplains defines religion differently, which adds a problematic complexity to this discussion.

The Humanist Society is the organization working to endorse the first Humanist chaplain into the military. The organization began as a Christian organization in 1939. It was in December of 1939 under the state laws of California that a group of Quakers formed the Humanist Society of Friends as a "religious, educational, charitable nonprofit organization."[8] It has since dropped the "of Friends" designation and is presently named simply the Humanist Society. Today, the Humanist Society is designated as a religious organization by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and holds tax-exempt status. In addition, it also meets the DoD policy definition of "religious organization" which is defined as,

> An entity that is organized and functions primarily to perform religious ministries to a non-military lay constituency and that has met the religious purposes test of section 501(c)(3) of title 26, United States Code (Reference (i)), and holds current status as a section 501(c)(3) Schedule "A" organization.[9]

Even though the Humanist Society as an organization is no longer Christian, they qualify for IRS tax exemption status as a "church" and therefore believe they are qualified to endorse military chaplains. They have met the policy requirement of holding a "religious organization" status, but they do not yet meet the DoD policy requirement to qualify as an endorsing agency.

The Department of Defense issues official policy for military chaplaincies through DoD Directives and Instructions. Two main Instructions lay out policy for religious support in the military. The first covers religious accommodation for service members, and the second covers the process of approval for new endorsing agencies.

DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1300.17, updated on 22 January 2014, is the DoDI that defines the policy for *Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services*. This issuance sets forth the policy for religious accommodation for all branches of the military. Specifically, it states that the exercise of religion "*includes any religious practice(s), whether or not compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief* [emphasis in original]."[10] Furthermore, it states,

> *Military Departments will accommodate individual expressions of sincerely held beliefs (conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs) of Service members in accordance with the policies and procedures in this instruction* [emphasis in original].[11]

According to DoDI 1300.17, commanders will accommodate religious practices and sincerely held beliefs whether they are compelled by a system of religious beliefs or not. The point here is that, "accommodating sincerely held beliefs" does not necessarily require a chaplain for accommodation. Soldiers' sincerely held beliefs may or may not be religious in nature, and the commander is the one who decides how to best accommodate such beliefs. Identifying Humanism as either a religion or as sincerely held beliefs (or both) makes it difficult to resolve this issue.

The second DoD Instruction on religious support, DoDI 1304.28, outlines the requirements and process used by the DoD to recognize an organization as an official religious endorsing authority. As of this writing, no officially qualified Humanist organization has been accepted by the DoD, because no qualified candidates have been accepted. A branch of the Armed Forces must approve a fully qualified candidate as fit for military service before a new endorsing agency will be considered for approval. In other words, until one of the Military Departments accepts an applicant as qualified, a prospective endorsing agency will not have a complete packet for consideration. The only Humanist organization that is close to receiving approval is the Humanist Society.

The Humanist Society claims to have met the requirement of paragraph 6.1.1.2 of DoDI 1304.28 which states,

> If a religious organization has not previously endorsed military chaplains, it shall file the administrative documents required by Enclosure 3 in conjunction with the endorsement of its first fully qualified RMP [Religious Ministry Professional] in an application for appointment as a chaplain for a Military Department.[12]

However, according to this DoDI, a single missing document from the Military Department (in this case, the Navy) renders the packet incomplete. DoDI 1304.28 specifically states,

> The Armed Forces Chaplains Board (AFCB) shall accept the required documents only when the applicable Military Department has determined the RMP is fully qualified *in all ways other than ecclesiastical endorsement* [emphasis added].[13]

Therefore, even though the Humanist Society has completely filed all the required documents from their organization, and the applicant meets all of the ecclesiastical endorsement requirements, the packet is not complete until the AFCB receives a letter from the US Navy qualifying the applicant.

According to the endorser for the Humanist Society, Jason Heap submitted all the required documents to become the first Navy Humanist Chaplain in the summer of 2013. However, after a long wait, the Navy rejected Dr. Heap's application in May 2014. Therefore, as of today, none of the US Military Departments have approved a qualified Humanist candidate for its Chaplaincy, which also means that the Humanist Society still holds an incomplete packet for consideration as an approved endorsing agency. For some members of Congress, this process is not acceptable.

In the summer of 2013, the House of Representatives tried to authorize an alternative way to fund non-theistic chaplains; it resulted in a spurious attempt to demonize Humanist and other non-religious ministry professionals. Many on-line bloggers claimed that Congress voted against Humanist chaplains in the military. The fact is, the House Appropriations Committee adopted Amendment 160 as part of the approved fiscal year 2014 Defense Appropriations Bill, which reads, "Amendment prevents funds from being used to appoint chaplains without an endorsing agency."[14] The bill did not prevent funds from supporting atheist or Humanist Chaplains (even though that was clearly the intent), but from appointing chaplains without an endorsing agency. NTLS Humanists have an endorsing agency – the Humanist Society – but as stated earlier, no Military Department has qualified a Humanist applicant that meets the DoD requirements. The Humanist Society claims that the reason the Navy rejected Jason Heap was because his endorsing agency is non-theistic. This is the first problem.

The other obstacle inhibiting the US Army from appointing Humanist chaplains is the culture of the Chaplaincy. A point that causes great tension deals with the US Army Chaplain Corps motto, which reads, "*Pro Deo et Patria* . . . For God and Country." According to Army Regulation 165-1, chaplains

> must have the capability to perform or provide religious support that accommodates the Soldier's right to the free exercise of religion and support resilience efforts to sustain Soldiers, Family members, and authorized Civilians.[15]

According to this Army Regulation, chaplains either *perform or provide* religious support.

Chaplains *perform* religious rites, ceremonies, ordinances, and sacraments according to the tenets of their particular religious beliefs. If the tenets of their faith do not permit them to *perform* a religious requirement, they *provide* the distinctive religious support by connecting the Soldier, family member, or civilian to a religious ministry professional *who can*

perform the requested religious requirements. This raises the question: how could an atheist align with either the Chaplain motto or the regulation to perform or provide religious support? One might presume that an atheist could not possibly *perform* any religious requirements for Soldiers; at best they would have to *provide* every aspect of religious support. So with such obstacles, why would a Humanist want to be an Army chaplain at all? Do Humanists even need chaplain support? These questions lie at the heart of deciding whether or not there should be atheist chaplains in the US Army.

Additional questions that demand answers are the following: What is the purpose of the US Army Chaplaincy? Is Humanism a religion? How could an atheist or agnostic provide religious support or serve as a religious leader? What are the religious needs of the non-theistic population? Should non-theistic life stance groups fall under the purview of the Chaplaincy? These are the questions the remainder of this study seeks to answer. The next chapter looks at the history and purpose of the US Army Chaplaincy, which serves as the foundational basis for addressing these questions.

Notes

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "religion," 2nd ed., Vol 13 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 568.

2. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "religion," 569.

3. Douglas Harper, s.v. "religion," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=religion&-searchmode=none (accessed 14 February 2014).

4. Harper, s.v. "religion," *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

5. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "religion," 568.

6. Harper, s.v. "religion," *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

7. *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1997), xvi.

8. The Humanist Society, "about," http://humanist-society.org/about/ (accessed 8 March 2014).

9. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1304.28, Guidance for the Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Departments, Incorporating Change 3*. Effective 20 March 2014, http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130428p.pdf (accessed 16 October 2013), 12.

10. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1300.17, Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services, Incorporating Change 1*, Effective 22 January 2014, http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130017p.pdf (accessed 9 March 2014), 2.

11. Department of Defense, *DoDI 1300.17*, 3.

12. Department of Defense, *DoDI 1304.28*, 3.

13. Department of Defense, *DoDI 1304.28, 3*.

14. Gop.gov, *Legislative Digest*, http://www.gop.gov/bill/113/1/hr2397 (accessed 14 October 2013).

15. Department of the Army, *AR 165-1*, 2015, 6.

Chapter 4
The US Army Chaplaincy: Its History and Purpose

United States Army chaplains perform or provide religious support to accommodate the right of free exercise of religion for all military members, family members, and authorized Department of Defense civilians.[1] This is the primary purpose of the Army Chaplain Corps. As stated in the previous chapter, if the chaplain cannot perform the religious rite, sacrament, ordinance, or religious requirement requested by an individual or group of individuals, the chaplain is responsible to provide religious support based on available resources. If a Soldier requests a religious book, the chaplain will attempt to supply that Soldier with the requested book. The chaplain will also try to connect the Soldier to an approved religious group leader of that particular religion.

Presently, many chaplains do not provide non-theistic support with scientific or philosophical literature to help meet the philosophical needs of their non-religious Soldiers. Non-Theistic Life Stance Humanists are working to change this paradigm and actively seek a path to ensure representation within the Army Chaplain Corps through Distinctive Religious Group Leaders (DRGLs) and chaplains. This chapter will review the history and purpose of the Army Chaplaincy to provide some background and context for the debate on appointing Humanist or atheist chaplains into the Army.

A History of the US Army Chaplaincy

As a precursor to answering the question, "What is the purpose of the Army Chaplaincy?" it will be useful to provide some context by tracing the history of the 240 year-old Chaplaincy from its roots. According to documents in the Chaplain Corps official history, the US Army Chaplaincy has spiritual roots in both the pages of the Old Testament and the British military forces. Dating back to the Biblical reference of Deuteronomy 20:2-4, clergymen were appointed to accompany soldiers in battle to lift morale by providing words of spiritual comfort and patriotic sentiments.[2] The Christian Church built its Chaplaincy upon the same Old Testament concept and decreed a place for military clergy in Canon 2 of the Council of Ratisbon in 742 AD:

> We prohibit the servant of God in every way from bearing arms or fighting in the army or going against the enemy except those alone who because of the sacred office, namely, for celebrating mass and caring for the relics of the saints, have been designated

> for this office; that is and each captain may have one priest, in order to hear-confessions of the men and impose upon them the proper penance.[3]

Chaplains cared for the relics of the saints as early as the fourth century. In fact, the word "chaplain" dates back to the fourth century legend of Martin of Tours, a pagan Roman soldier. The story is told that St. Martin, when he was a soldier, cut his cloak in half and gave it to a shivering beggar.[4] That same night he experienced a vision of a man who was dressed in the half cloak, a man whom Martin believed to be Christ. Afterward, he converted to Christianity and was deeply devoted to the church. Following his death, he was canonized and later became known as the patron saint of France. Subsequently, Frankish kings carried his cloak into battle as a holy relic. In Latin, his cloak was called

> the "cappa." Its portable shrine was called the "capella" and its caretaker priest, the "cappellanus." Eventually, all clergy affiliated with military were called "capellani," or in French "chapelains," hence chaplains.[5]

Chaplains were so called because they were originally charged with protecting the half cape – or *cappa* – of St. Martin.

A chaplain came to be known as a minister or custodian who was in charge of the chapel, or tent, where St. Martin's cloak and other sacred relics were preserved.[6] Chaplains not only guarded such relics but also conducted Mass and gradually became known for providing both ecclesiastical and secular advice to the monarch, particularly during the reign of Charlemagne. The term is associated with the early centuries of the Christian church. Today, the term refers to an ordained clergy member who is assigned to a special ministry, such as in a hospital, prison, university, legislative chamber, or the armed forces, rather than a particular church or denomination.[7]

By the late sixteenth century, during the reign of the Tudor Dynasy in England, chaplains had clearly defined duties. The regimental commander was responsible "to have a well-governed and religious preacher in his regiment so that by his life and doctrines the soldiers may be drawn to goodness."[8] The preacher would hold morning and evening formations, and on Sundays, the unit commander compelled soldiers (who were not on guard duty) to attend prayers and a sermon in the Colonel's tent. The chaplain's primary duty was, "to have 'care of souls,' and it is well if he meddle with no other business, but make that his only care."[9] After the regimental chaplain system was abolished in 1796, an organized chaplain department

was formed, and care for souls remained the chaplain's primary duty. Similar to the duties of British chaplains, American chaplains' duties were also to care for souls as well as perform

> traditional clerical functions of preaching, praying, administering the rites, sacraments, and ordinances of the Church, visiting the sick, and burying the dead.[10]

Between the founding of Jamestown and 1775, emerging colonial Americans saw nearly continuous war with both the French and the Native American tribes as each side battled for control of the continent. When the colonial militia went into battle, a local minister, preferably young and physically capable, accompanied the troops dressed in his black broadcloth suit. Religion played a major role in the lives of Americans during this time, and the community viewed the minister as a powerful authority figure. In fact, "not even a minor military operation was planned or carried out without making sure that a minister was available to counsel and motivate the colonial fighting man."[11] Then on 29 July 1775, the Continental Congress voted to pay chaplains twenty dollars a month (the same amount paid to captains), thus giving chaplains official recognition by the American government and an official birth date of the Chaplaincy.

On 9 July 1776, General George Washington issued the following General Order pertaining to chaplains:

> The Honorable Continental Congress having been pleased to allow a Chaplain to each Regiment, with the pay of Thirty-Three Dollars and one third dollars [per] month – The Colonels or commanding officers of each regiment are directed to procure Chaplains accordingly; persons of good Characters and exemplary lives – To see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them a suitable respect and attend carefully upon religious exercises. The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger. The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act as becomes a Christian Soldier defending the dearest Rights and Liberties of his country.[12]

General Washington and General Rufus Putnam recommended a chaplain be assigned to each regiment as part of the military structure, but Congress felt the regiment was too small and thus chaplains were assigned to each brigade until 1818. After that time, chaplains were no longer assigned to brigades but instead served with state militias. Then on 14 April 1818, *The Act for Regulating the Staff of the Army*

> permitted "one chaplain, stationed at the Military Academy at West Point, who shall also be Professor of Geography, History, and Ethics, with the pay and emoluments allowed the Professor of Mathematics."[13]

Between 1818 and 1838, the chaplain at West Point was the only authorized Regular Army chaplain. On 5 July 1838, the Army established the position of post chaplains, which began with 15 posts and expanded to 40 by 1849.

At the beginning of the war with Mexico in 1846, the Army Chaplaincy contained only Protestant chaplains. The absence of Roman Catholic chaplains became such a problem that the White House collaborated with two Bishops to resolve the issue. Within six weeks, two Jesuit priests joined the Army on the Rio Grande. However, in 1850, the problem was not the absence of one particular faith group but rather an opposition to the Chaplaincy altogether. Critics maintained that it was unconstitutional for chaplains to be employed by the Federal Government. The judiciary committee defended the Chaplaincy that year and also in 1853 and again in 1856.[14]

In 1861, regimental chaplains were appointed "as the President may direct" and were "ordained ministers of some Christian denomination." However, the qualification was changed almost a year later to read,

> That no person shall be appointed a chaplain in the United States Army who is not a regularly ordained minister of some religious denomination, and who does not present testimonials of his good standing as such minister, with a recommendation of his appointment as an Army chaplain from some authorized ecclesiastical body, or not less than five accredited ministers belonging to said religious denomination.[15]

It was not until the Civil War that the Army Chaplaincy saw a significant increase in Roman Catholic field chaplains as well as its first Jewish, black, and Native American chaplains.[16] After the turn of the century, the Chaplain Corps began emerging as a professional branch as the result of three major developments. In 1909, a Board of Chaplains was created for the purpose of analyzing recommendations and suggestions for an effective Chaplaincy. Then on 9 February 1918, the Army established a school to train chaplains and chaplain candidates.[17] Finally, the National Defense Act of 4 June 1920 included a provision to appoint a Chief of Chaplains. On 15 June 1920, Congregationalist John Thomas Axton became the first Army Chief of Chaplains.[18]

Through the years of World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the Cold War, chaplains continued their duties to provide religious services, visit the sick and wounded, conduct funerals, and provide ethical and educational training to the troops. They also conducted religious retreats and gave lectures on character guidance and venereal diseases. Additionally, chaplains held workshops for drug users and often provided activities to boost morale. After the My Lai incident, chaplains provided training on how to report atrocities and other legal matters. Even chaplains needed training on how to report such events as the My Lai massacre, because a helicopter pilot reported to a chaplain that, "civilians had been unnecessarily and purposefully killed during the operation."[19] Apparently this chaplain only passed on a verbal report of the incident, which was subsequently passed on to division staff, but no written record could be found to substantiate the original chaplain's report from the pilot. Conflicting reports came out a year and a half after the event claiming that the chaplain reported some other event unrelated to the atrocities of My Lai.[20]

US Army Chaplains by Faith Group				
Chaplains	Active	Reserve	National Guard	Total
Protestant	1413	721	657	2791
Catholic	98	38	35	172
Jewish	10	13	2	25
Orthodox	8	5	3	16
Islamic	5	0	0	5
Buddhist	2	1	0	3
Hindu	0	0	0	0
Total:	1536	779	697	3012

Figure 1: Breakdown of US Army Chaplains by faith group and component, 2015. Source: DACH-1 strength reports for Active Duty and through telephonic/email solicitation from the Army Reserves and National Guard. The data was collected over a period a months and is not intended as a precise or exacting account but rather a working number for planning purposes. Note: this data is NOT an official Army count.

The religious denominations composing the chaplaincy – Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish – broadened to include the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1979. In 1987, the Buddhist Churches of America was approved as an ecclesiastical endorsing agency for Buddhist chaplains.[21] The Army

approved its first Muslim chaplain in 1993, its first Buddhist chaplain in 2008 (National Guard), and its first Hindu chaplain in 2011.[22] Today the Army is comprised of over 3,000 active duty, National Guard, and Reserve chaplains. See Figure 1 on the previous page for a breakdown of the US Army Chaplain Corps by denomination and component.

Purpose of the US Army Chaplaincy

The history of the chaplain corps provided some context for understanding the purpose of the Chaplaincy. The US Army Chaplaincy recognizes its purpose to support the Constitution of the United States by following Title 10 of the US Code (USC), DoD Policy, Army regulations, religious requirements, and the Army mission.[23] The publication that establishes policies and responsibilities along with the administrative procedures necessary to implement policies on Religious Support is Army Regulation 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*. Field Manual 1-05, *Religious Support* describes how chaplains and chaplain assistants carry out their responsibilities in the field.

Section 3073 in Title 10 of the USC provides the legal basis for chaplains as it states,

> There are chaplains in the Army. The Chaplains include – (1) the Chief of Chaplains; (2) commissioned officers of the Regular Army appointed as chaplains; and (3) other officers of the Army appointed as chaplains in the Army.[24]

Section 3547 prescribes the legal duties and responsibilities of chaplains as well as the assistance required of commanding officers with regard to chaplains. It specifically states,

> (a) Each chaplain shall, when practicable, hold appropriate religious services at least once on each Sunday for the command to which he is assigned, and shall perform appropriate religious burial services for members of the Army who die while in that command. (b) Each commanding officer shall furnish facilities, including necessary transportation, to any chaplain assigned to his command, to assist the chaplain in performing his duties.[25]

Section 3581 provides the final Federal legal requirement by stipulating, "A chaplain has rank without command."[26] Federal law requires the Army to appoint non-commanding chaplains as commissioned officers to hold appropriate weekly religious services and perform appropriate burial services.

Department of Defense Directive 1304.19 provides the policy directive for appointing Chaplains for the Military Departments. This directive provides the reason for the establishment of Chaplaincies in Military Departments:

> [Chaplaincies] are established to advise and assist commanders in the discharge of their responsibilities to provide for the free exercise of religion in the context of military service as guaranteed by the Constitution, to assist commanders in managing Religious Affairs. . . and to serve as the principal advisors to commanders for all issues regarding the impact of religion on military operations. . . [Chaplains] shall serve a religiously diverse population. Within the military, commanders are required to provide comprehensive religious support to all authorized individuals within their areas of responsibility.[27]

This directive explicitly describes the purpose of Army Chaplains: to advise and assist commanders in providing for the free exercise of religion according to the Constitution of the United States and to serve as the principal advisor to commanders regarding religion as it impacts military operations. The commander is the one who is responsible to provide comprehensive religious support for the unit under his or her command. The chaplain is the resource the commander uses to accomplish that directive.

The Chief of Chaplains further directs how chaplains carry out their duties and responsibilities through written policy on Religious Support as found in Army Regulation 165-1. Chaplains conduct religious support operations based on three principles: to Nurture the Living, Care for the Wounded, and Honor the Fallen. They deliver religious support through two core capabilities: professional military religious leader and professional military religious advisor. Field Manual 1-05 defines Religious Support as,

> providing those aspects of religious education, clergy counsel, pastoral care, authentic worship, and faith group expression that would otherwise be denied as a practical matter to soldiers under the varied circumstances of military contingencies.[28]

As professional military religious leaders, chaplains "perform" or "provide" religious support that meets the unique religious and spiritual needs of the military culture. They perform religious requirements according to the tenets of their faith. When unable to perform a religious requirement because of the tenets of their faith, they provide for the needed requirements by connecting the individual or group of individuals to

another religious ministry professional who can perform the needed religious requirements.

As professional military religious support staff advisors, chaplains serve as personal staff officers to their commanders and provide professional advice regarding the First Amendment to the US Constitution that prohibits enactment of any law "respecting an establishment of religion" or "prohibiting the free exercise thereof."[29] This is important because the Establishment Clause forbids any governmental authority from mandating a certain religion or particular form of prayer. Additionally, the Free Exercise Clause guarantees each person the right to practice the religious requirements as dictated by his or her faith and conscience.

Chaplains also provide religious advisement to the command and staff on matters of religion, morals, and morale as affected by religion. They participate in operational planning and deliver religious support in all phases of military operations. Furthermore, chaplains provide moral, spiritual, ethical, and leadership training and conduct programs that foster the development and sustainment of spiritual resiliency.[30]

Additionally, chaplains provide confidential counseling to military constituents. Chapter 16-2 of AR 165-1 defines confidential communication:

> Confidential communication is any communication given to a chaplain by an individual, to include enemy prisoners of war, if such communication is made either as a formal act of religion or as a matter of conscience. A communication is "confidential" if made to a chaplain in the chaplain's capacity as a spiritual advisor or to a religious affairs specialist in his or her official capacity and is not intended to be disclosed to third persons.[31]

It is important to note that,

> The privilege of non-disclosure of confidential information belongs to the individual. . . The privilege may also be claimed on behalf of the person by the chaplain or religious affairs specialist (formerly known as chaplain assistant) who received the communication.[32]

Privileged communication is not limited to religious or theistic personnel. Everyone who speaks to a chaplain or religious affairs specialist has the right to confidential communication as long as the communication is a formal religious act or a matter of conscience.

In the pluralistic military setting, chaplains provide religious support opportunities for personnel of all religions. They collaborate across the

religious spectrum – without compromising the tenets of their faith or ecclesiastical requirements – to perform or provide comprehensive religious support.[33] Therefore, the answer to the question "What is the purpose of the Army Chaplaincy?" is to advise and assist commanders in providing for the free exercise of religion according to the Constitution of the United States and to serve as the principal advisor to commanders regarding religion as it impacts military operations. Chaplains provide comprehensive religious support and serve as religious leaders in their units.

Although it is not a policy requirement to provide atheistic resources and other non-religious support, chaplains do provide support to all personnel to which they are assigned, including both religious and non-religious personnel. Non-religious needs such as community development and teaching how to adapt to difficult circumstances outside of a theological context are not the chaplain's primary purpose. Chaplains do, however, spend time with non-religious Soldiers to find out how they can best provide support – whether it is helping with stress or anger management, suicide intervention, work-related tensions, relationship issues, or other personal struggles. Chaplains provide support to all personnel in their command regardless of their religious preference. Chaplains also receive training in solution-focused counseling which includes the importance of knowing when to refer to other agencies or helping professions. Even though chaplains provide support for non-theistic Soldiers, the push for appointing non-theistic chaplains has been gaining traction.

Notes

1. Department of the Army, *AR 165-1*, 2015, 5-6.

2. Parker C. Thompson, *From Its European Antecedents to 1791: The United States Army Chaplaincy*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, 1978), xi.

3. Thompson, *From Its European Antecedents to 1791*, xi.

4. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "chaplain," http://www.britannica.com/EB-checked/topic/106107/chaplain (accessed 16 February 2014); Douglas Harper, s.v. "chapel," Online Etymology Dictionary, http://www. etymonline.com/index.php?term=chapel&allowed_in_frame=0 (accessed 16 February 2014).

5. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, 2004), 1.

6. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "chaplain," 27.

7. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "chaplain."

8. Thompson, *From Its European Antecedents to 1791*, xii-xiii.

9. Thompson, *From Its European Antecedents to 1791*, xiii.

10. Thompson, *From Its European Antecedents to 1791*, xvii.

11. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 2.

12. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 4.

13. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 8.

14. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 9.

15. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 10.

16. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 11.

17. Although initially established in 1918, the school was deactivated after the war and then reactivated two years later. It was again deactivated in 1928 and reactivated after the bombing of Pearl Harbor early in 1942.

18. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 17-21.

19. Rodger R. Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1945-1975*, Vol. V (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, 1977), 158.

20.Venzke, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace*, 158.

21. Department of the Army, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy*, 27-40.

22. United States Army Chaplain Center and School, *Official Chaplain History*.

23. Department of the Army, *AR 165-1, 2015*, 7.

24. Title 10, United States Code, Armed Forces, 1714.

25. Title 10, United States Code, Armed Forces, 1730.

26. Title 10, United States Code, Armed Forces, 1732.

27. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive 1304.19, Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Departments*, (11 June 2004), http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130419p.pdf (accessed 3 April 2014), 2.

28. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 1-05, Religious Support* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-2.

29. US Constitution, Amendment 1.

30. Department of the Army, *AR 165-1, 2015*, 6-8.

31. Department of the Army, *AR 165-1, 2015*, 45.

32. Department of the Army, *AR 165-1, 2015*, 45.

33. US Army Chaplain Corps, "US Army Corps Chaplain History," *Chapnet*, http://chapnet.chaplaincorps.net/index.php/about-2/history/ (accessed 3 April 2014).

Chapter 5
The Atheist Chaplain Debate: Support and Opposition

Support for Non-Theistic Chaplains in the Army

There are several articles written on the necessity of non-theistic chaplains in the military. Most of the articles showing support for such a change originate from secular humanist organizations. It is important to note that some atheistic and secular humanist groups do not support having any chaplains in the Army, or in any government organization, due to the Jeffersonian idea of the separation of church and state. Three primary sources argue for non-theistic chaplains in the military.

The first, an article entitled, "Secular Americans Applaud 173 US Reps, Stood Up to Anti-Humanist Chaplain Amendment," was published on a Secular Humanist website in 2013 and discussed how 173 members of the US House of Representatives opposed an amendment that proposed to limit the appointment of non-religious chaplains. The amendment, in a 253-173 vote, passed and stipulated that it would "prevent funds from being used to appoint chaplains without an endorsing agency."[1] The article suggested both humanist and Buddhist chaplains are considered non-religious and argued that the passing of this amendment also affected the ability to have Buddhist military chaplains. (The Army had appointed legitimately endorsed Buddhist chaplains already, so it is unclear why this article claims that Buddhists are without an endorsing agency.) The article went on to quote the Executive Director for the Secular Coalition for America, Edwina Rogers, who said the vote, "demonstrates a fast-growing consensus in recognizing not only the importance of Humanist chaplains but equal rights for all military members regardless of religious belief."[2]

The article credited Representative Jared Polis (D-CO) with introducing an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to allow non-theistic chaplains in the US Armed Forces. Rep. Polis is quoted as saying, "Almost a quarter of men and women in the armed services either have no religion or are non-believers, yet there are currently no chaplains representative of this community."[3] This quote from Rep. Polis is the primary argument from many secular humanist groups who say that the non-religious community should be represented in the Chaplain Corps, but is presently not represented at all. Edwina Rogers said, "Religious chaplains are ill equipped to handle the problems of nontheistic service members."[4]

The second source is a 2013 article written by Hemant Mehta, chair of Foundation Beyond Belief and author of *The Young Atheist's Survival Guide.* Mehta contributes to "The Friendly Atheist" blog and wrote an article on Patheos.com, a website dedicated to engaging in a global dialogue about religion and spirituality. The article, "House Votes Down Amendment Allowing Non-religious Military Chaplains, but 150 Democrats Voted for It," as with the previous mentioned article, also addresses the issue of supporting non-religious chaplains in the military. Mehta credits House Representative Rob Andrews (D-NJ) as proposing the following amendment:

> The Secretary of Defense shall provide for the appointment, as officers in the Chaplain Corps of the Armed Forces, of persons who are certified or ordained by non-theistic organizations and institutions, such as humanist, ethical culturalist, or atheist.[5]

This amendment was presented prior to the amendment presented by Rep. Polis. Only 150 democrats supported this proposal. An additional twenty-three democrats supported the second effort showing an increase in support for non-religious chaplains in the Armed Forces. Mehta suggested the definition of the "chaplain" be changed. He explained that a chaplain does nothing that a Humanist could not do "in an analogous way" such as holding weekly services and burials. He said they would not pray to a fictional god, but that a chaplain's job is to comfort and counsel, and atheists deserve to have that same opportunity as everyone else.[6] In essence, this article says that non-religious chaplains can do everything that a religious chaplain can do – except pray.

The third source, and one of the most comprehensive articles on the topic, came from Jason Torpy, the President of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF). The 2013 article, "Playing Favorites: What Beliefs Should Chaplains Support?" covers the majority of issues surrounding the question of whether or not the Army should appoint atheist chaplains. The primary concerns Torpy addressed are the role of the chaplain, defining the scope of the Chaplaincy, the IRS definition of "church," who benefits from chaplain services, the changing identity of the Chaplaincy, chaplain endorsing qualifications, and the inconsistency within the Chaplain Corps regarding the non-theistic population.

As the title suggests, one of the primary concerns pro-humanist chaplain groups have with the Army Chaplaincy in its current form is that there does not seem to be a uniform understanding on whom chaplains should serve. It also suggests a discrepancy between what chaplain services

should include or exclude. Torpy explained the role of the Chaplaincy from his perspective as providing "care and counseling, free exercise, and establishment clause responsibilities."[7] He explains that the scope of the Chaplaincy is changing and should become more relevant to meet the needs of the growing humanist, agnostic, and atheist population.

In the article, Torpy discussed a conversation he had with a military chaplain who could not give a clear definition of the word "religion." However, he quoted an Equal Opportunity regulation definition from the Department of Defense simply as "deeply-held beliefs."[8] He made the point that defining such terms as "religion" or "spirituality" is not the heart of the issue, but contended rather that the focus should be on who actually benefits from chaplain support. He described two categories as the in-crowd, or those who reap all the benefits chaplains provide, and the out-crowd, or those whose beliefs are not accepted and often completely unrecognized. This variance of who is "in" leads to what Torpy considers an inconsistency within the Chaplain Corps. He argued that some chaplains willingly provide care and refer their professing atheist Soldiers to secular humanist organizations for the purpose of like-minded support. Other chaplains, he contended, would simply not minister to an unbelieving Soldier. Furthermore, he argued that unless one professes a belief in some form of supernatural power, the benefits of the Chaplaincy are not extended to that individual.

Torpy further explains that the IRS definition of "church" or religious group has already been appointed to non-theistic groups which possess deeply held beliefs and obtain a tax exempt 501(c)3 non-profit status. Therefore, if the government recognizes the group as a legitimate "religious" group, then the military should recognize it as well. The bottom line for Torpy is that the military Chaplaincy needs to change in order to accommodate a growing non-theistic population. There are several other articles that support the idea of having non-religious chaplains in the military, including many well-argued articles by Torpy that can be accessed on the MAAF website.

Opposition against Non-Theistic Chaplains in the Army

There are also several people and organizations that take the opposite view, arguing against non-theist or humanist chaplains in the Armed Forces. The first article comes from the Executive Director of the Council for Secular Humanism, Tom Flynn.

In the editorial, "Humanist Chaplains in the Military: A Bridge Too Close?" from the October/November 2011 issue of the Secular Humanist

magazine *Free Inquiry*, Flynn argued that secular humanists should not be chaplains in the military. He asserted that military chaplains perform outside of their prescribed capabilities by conducting services unrelated to religion, which results in their "obligations to provide secular, scientific mental-health support."[9] He argued that chaplains should not be gatekeepers for such important services not involving religion, saying "They should perform sacerdotal functions and nothing else."[10] Flynn went on to argue that non-religious personnel should have an opportunity to visit a scientific mental-health practitioner without the possibility of adverse actions on one's career. Presently, he says, chaplains are the only confidential resource for service members who do not want a record of their visit to a counselor, which he also asserts is a violation of the separation of church and state.[11]

The other problem Flynn has with the idea of a humanist Chaplaincy is that he believes it portrays a false perception that resembles just another "religious" category, which is antithetical to an atheistic mindset. He disagreed with Jason Torpy, who said that humanism fills a role for atheists similarly to how Christianity supports Christians. The problem Flynn has with that sentiment is that he does not believe that humanism fills a necessary role, because humanism and atheism are distinct worldviews from one another. In other words, humanism does not speak for all atheists, nor are all atheists humanists. Therefore, to connect atheists with a specific "group" that has psychological needs similar to religious groups, except without faith or supernaturalism, is to categorize a "group" of *nonbelievers* who do not want or need to be categorized as having similar needs to religious groups.

Instead of campaigning for what he calls an "oxymoronic humanist/atheist Chaplaincy" in the military, Flynn suggests exempting nonreligious service members from required interaction with chaplains and supports instituting a confidential path to counseling that bypasses the chaplain altogether. He concluded the article by saying, "[Secular humanists] reject religion *as a category* and take pride in having crafted a way to live without religion. . . People who reject religion as a category have no business becoming chaplains. If we succeed in doing so, we should not be surprised if many in the larger culture find our claims to live *without* religion ringing hollow."[12] Although for different reasons, Flynn is not alone in his stance against humanist chaplains in the military.

A 2013 press release issued by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights (CLRCR) also disagreed with the demands to employ atheist chaplains. It referenced the proposed National Defense Authorization Act,

mentioned earlier in this chapter, to fund atheist chaplains in the armed forces. The press release directly addressed Jason Torpy of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, by crediting his organization as a primary catalyst for the atheist chaplain movement. The CLRCR contended that Torpy claims it is unfair that Christians have chaplains but atheists do not. The press release offered an analogy by saying, "it is true that throughout the nation, atheists have no chaplains; it is also true that vegetarians have no butchers."[13] The statement argued against Torpy's alleged assertion that 40,000 atheists in the armed forces need atheist chaplain support. The CLRCR claimed that the Department of Defense lists only 9,400 atheist or agnostic service members out of the 1.4 million active duty personnel. Furthermore, the CLRCR suggested that the goal of MAAF is not to have atheist chaplains but rather to "censor the public expression of religion, especially Christianity" and that this movement is just a backdoor ploy to continue a war on Christianity.[14]

In a 2013 article from *Townhall* Magazine regarding the 23 July 2013 bipartisan approved amendment to the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, columnist Caleb Dalton argued in support of the amendment, saying chaplains indeed should be religious.[15] The conservative news and opinion magazine article entitled "Square Circles, Atheist Chaplains," focused on the assertion that the primary role of a chaplain is religious in nature. Dalton supported his claim by referencing a dictionary definition of the term "chaplain" and by quoting the Army Chaplaincy motto, *Pro Deo et Patria*, translated as "For God and Country."[16] He continued by arguing against the request of Jason Heap, who applied to become a humanist chaplain in the US Navy. Dalton claimed that a non-religious chaplain could not offer a prayer to a dying service member, but that a religious chaplain could minister effectively to a non-religious person. He quoted US Representative and Air Force Chaplain Doug Collins who said in a house debate, "if a chaplain is doing their job right, then all feel welcome."[17] Mr. Dalton contended that an atheist would only partially be able to fulfill the role as a chaplain, because he or she would not be able to provide any religious ministries. Whereas religious chaplains are capable of performing secondary roles of counseling, grief care, and moral guidance, an atheist "simply cannot offer the religious services required of a chaplain anymore [sic] than a square can declare itself to be circle."[18]

Finally, one of the most outspoken and well-developed arguments against the issue of atheists in the military comes from the Winter 2014 issue of the *University of San Francisco Law Review*. The author, Antony Barone Kolenc, drew conclusions from a legal perspective by using the

US Constitution as the foundation for his argument. The article provides an in-depth look at the First Amendment and how religion plays into this debate. The 62 page article touches on many issues also covered in this book, and one issue that stands out is the use of a narrow definition of religion. Kolenc wrote,

> if religion can no longer be distinguished from nonreligion, then the Religion Clauses would seem to protect nothing special. Using a narrower definition of religion strikes the proper balance by taking into account the religious diversity of the modern world while also resisting the temptation to totally redefine constitutional terms.[19]

The article concludes with a recommendation for the availability of humanist and existential counseling, but outside of the Chaplain Corps.

Clearly, there is a disagreement as to whether the Army needs atheist chaplains to meet the needs of atheist and other non-religious Soldiers. Noticeably, a discrepancy exists between the recommendation for NTLS Humanist chaplains to minister only to the "non-theistic religious" population or everyone who considers themselves as non-religious. There is also a disagreement as to the genuine reason why atheists want to become chaplains. Some believe the reason is to provide genuine support for the non-religious and their life stance concerns. Others believe the goal of these atheist groups is to "invade" the Chaplaincy in order to secularize the Chaplain Corps and the Army altogether. The next chapter looks at what twelve prominent leaders in both the humanist and Army Chaplaincy communities have to say about the topic of atheists and religious support. The chapter begins with a review of non-theistic demographics, both in the military and society as a whole, to discover the current trends and needs of this population.

Notes

1. Secular Coalition for America, "Secular Americans Applaud 173 US Reps, Stood Up to Anti-Humanist Chaplain Amendment," (24 July 2013) http://secular.org/news/secular-americans-applaud-173-us-reps-stood-anti-humanist-chaplain-amendment (accessed 3 November 2013).

2. Secular Coalition for America, "Secular Americans Applaud 173 US Reps, Stood Up to Anti-Humanist Chaplain Amendment."

3. Secular Coalition for America, "Secular Americans Applaud 173 US Reps, Stood Up to Anti-Humanist Chaplain Amendment."

4. I Secular Coalition for America, "Secular Americans Applaud 173 US Reps, Stood Up to Anti-Humanist Chaplain Amendment."

5. Hemant Mehta, "House Votes Down Amendment Allowing Non-religious Military Chaplains, but 150 Democrats Voted for It," *Patheos*, (14 June 2013), http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2013/06/14/house-votes-down-amendment-allowing-non-religious-military-chaplains-but-150-democrats-voted-for-it/ (accessed 3 November 2013).

6. Mehta, "House Votes Down Amendment Allowing Non-religious Military Chaplains, but 150 Democrats Voted for It."

7. Jason Torpy, "Playing Favorites: What Beliefs Should Chaplains Support?" (23 April 2012), http://militaryatheists.org/news/2012/04/playing-favorites-what-beliefs-should-chaplains-support/ (accessed 3 November 2013).

8. Torpy, "Playing Favorites: What Beliefs Should Chaplains Support?"

9. Tom Flynn, "Humanist Chaplains in the Military: A Bridge Too Close?" *Free Inquiry* 31, no. 6 (October/November 2011).

10. Flynn, "Humanist Chaplains in the Military: A Bridge Too Close?"

11. Flynn, "Humanist Chaplains in the Military: A Bridge Too Close?"

12. Flynn, "Humanist Chaplains in the Military: A Bridge Too Close?"

13. The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, "The Atheist 'Chaplains' Ploy," *Catalyst* (September 2013), https://www.catholicleague.org/the-atheist-chaplains-ploy-2/ (accessed 5 November 2013).

14. The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, "The Atheist 'Chaplains' Ploy."

15. Caleb Dalton, "Square Circles, Atheist Chaplains." *Townhall* Magazine, (8 October 2013), http://townhall.com/columnists/calebdalton/2013/10/08/square-circles-atheist-chaplains-n1719056/page/full (accessed 5 November 2013).

16. Dalton, "Square Circles, Atheist Chaplains."

17. Dalton, "Square Circles, Atheist Chaplains."

18. Dalton, "Square Circles, Atheist Chaplains."

19. Antony Barone Kolenc, "Not 'For God and Country:' Atheist Military Chaplains and the Free Exercise Clause." *University of San Francisco Law Review*, vol. 48 (Winter 2014): 418. This article was published after the completion and acceptance of my Master's thesis, on which this study is based.

Chapter 6
A Growing Non-Theistic Population?

In much of the literature supporting atheist or non-theistic chaplains in the military, writers claim one of the main reasons to appoint non-theistic chaplains is because of the growth in the atheist, agnostic, and Humanist populations. Additionally, supporters of Humanist chaplains claim that much of the population which self identifies as "none" or "no religion in particular" is a part of the growing atheist, agnostic, and Humanist demographic.

According to the Pew Research Center, there has been a 6.7 percent increase in the religiously unaffiliated from 2007 to 2014. This population consists of atheists, agnostics, and those who identify with "nothing in particular." The same poll also showed a slight increase in those of non-Christian faiths as well as a dramatic 7.8 percent decrease in those who describe themselves as Christian.[1] Another Pew Research Center study from 2012 found those who identify as "nothing in particular" consist of the religious and non-religious, and the spiritual and non-spiritual. Pew research surveys showed that 81 percent of the "nothing in particular" or "nones" say they believe in God or a universal spirit.[2] Therefore, even though the "nones" demographic is on the rise, the data does not prove that "nones" are increasingly becoming non-theistic, but it does show they are becoming less Christian.

Moreover, another set of data shows that 68 percent of the religiously unaffiliated (agnostics, atheists, and "nones") recognizes the importance of belonging to a community that shares similar values and beliefs. So even though the religiously unaffiliated may not claim any form of organized religion, there appears to be a recognition that shared community is somewhat or very important.

After reviewing data from these surveys, one might conclude that many of the religiously unaffiliated would be interested in gathering as a community to discuss significant life events with those who share similar values and beliefs. This confirms Humanist groups' assertions that there is a growing desire for a platform to develop and share values and beliefs. But are these values and beliefs religious or just philosophical?

Trends in the military often reflect trends in society. However, the statistics available from the Office of Army Demographics paint a different picture (see Figure 2 on the next page). Since 2004, the increase in the atheist population was 0.3 percent. The "nones" or what the Army refers

to as "No Religious Preference" (NRP) actually dropped 1.3 percent over the past ten years. The most significant changes include an increase in the Protestant population by 3.2 percent, a decrease in active duty Catholics by 1.9 percent, and the NRP decrease already mentioned by 1.3 percent.

	2004		2007		2010		2013		
Faith Group	Active	%	Active	%	Active	%	Active	%	Change
Atheist	1,266	0.3	2,086	0.4	2,594	0.5	3,126	0.6	+0.3
Buddhist	1,489	0.3	1,806	0.3	2,113	0.4	2,250	0.4	+0.1
Protestant	251,209	50.8	272,905	51	289,992	51.6	280,193	53.1	+3.2
Catholic	103,084	20.9	105,388	19.7	106,211	18.9	99,594	18.9	-1.9
Orthodox	465	>0.1	538	0.1	569	0.1	595	0.1	+>0.1
Hindu	228	>0.1	239	>0.1	515	0.1	567	0.1	+>0.1
Jewish	1,488	0.3	1,706	0.3	1,869	0.3	1,875	0.4	+0.1
Muslim	1,769	0.4	1,634	0.3	1,838	0.3	1,853	0.4	0
Other Religions	3,352	0.7	4,161	0.8	4,469	0.8	3,801	0.7	0
No Preference/ Unknown	129,941	26.3	144,763	27	151,809	27	134,216	25.4	-1.3
Total	494,291		535,226		561,979		528,070		

Figure 2: Percentage change in active duty Army religious preferences by faith group, 2004-2013. *Source:* Defense Manpower Data Center West, Office of Army Demographics.

A more detailed review of the religious affiliation breakdown showed zero agnostics in the Active Army for 2004, 2007, 2010, and 2013. The numbers for agnostics in the Army Reserves also showed zero for each year researched. The National Guard however, lists 72 agnostics for 2004, 109 in 2007, 258 in 2010, and 399 for 2013. Agnostic was not listed as a category in 2001 for any Army components. It is unclear why only the National Guard presented statistics for agnostics. The absence of this statistic reveals a possible flaw in collecting accurate religious affiliation data, which could be a topic for future research but will not be addressed in this work.

Regardless of whether or not Soldiers listed their preferences truthfully, and regardless of whether or not the Army's procedure of collecting the data was able to represent the population accurately, the fact remains that a percentage of the population is indeed non-theistic. Although it is a small percentage, a population of non-theists definitely exists in the US Army. Hence, NTLS Humanist groups, like MAAF, believe all military departments should equally support all religious preferences, to include the non-religious population, with chaplains.

According to research conducted by the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers in 2012, demographics show disproportionate numbers of chaplains relative to the religious preferences of the overall DoD population for all the Military Departments. The data reveals a significantly high number of evangelical chaplains in relation to the general population of evangelicals. The data also reveals an obvious result of zero chaplains in relation to the general population of secular and atheist personnel (see Figure 3).

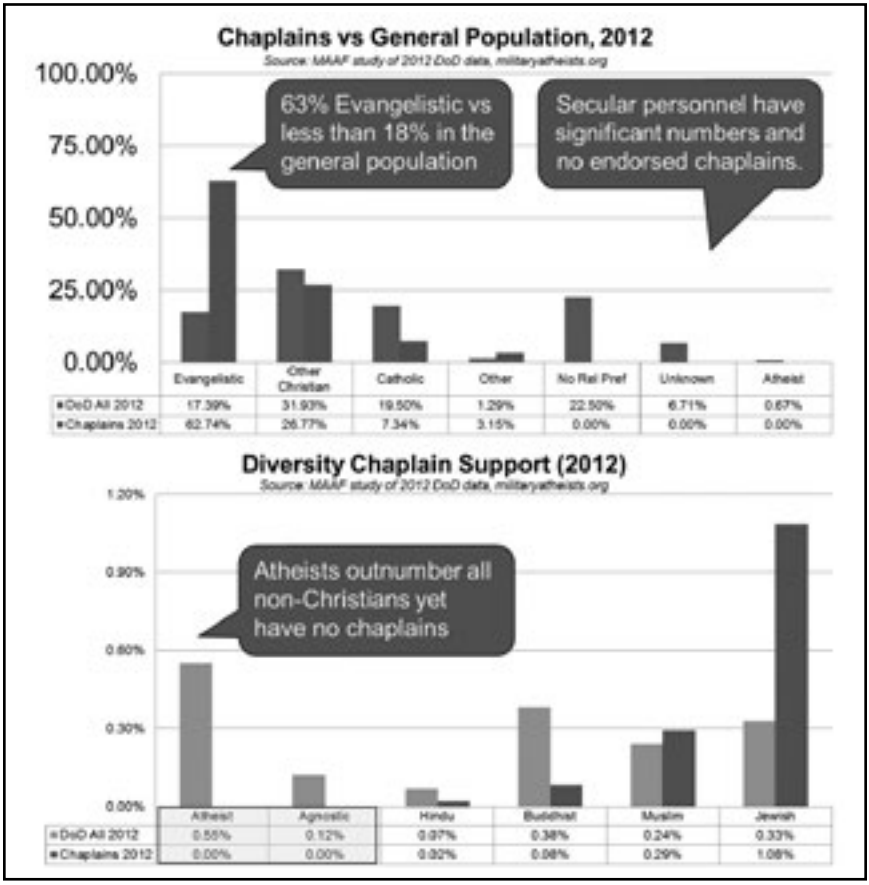

Figure 3: MAAF research on proportion of DoD chaplain support in relation to the DoD population, 2012. *Source:* Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, "Military Religious Demographics," http://militaryatheists.org/demographics/ (accessed 8 April 2014).

The MAAF and other Humanists want chaplain support for the Humanists in the Army, but as both Figures 2 and 3 suggest, there is no data available about the current Humanist population in the Army, because nei-

ther the Army nor the DoD currently tracks Humanism as a religion. To remedy this issue, an officer submitted a request to the Army to recognize Humanism as a religious preference for official Army records.[3] In April 2014, the Army approved the request. Therefore, the only non-theistic data available for the MAAF 2012 study was the atheist, agnostic, and no preference populations.[4] In the absence of any Humanist data, it appears that the MAAF 2012 study focuses on the fact that the non-religious and atheist population have no chaplain representation, which seems to indicate a desire to represent more than just the NTLS Humanist population with Humanist chaplain support. Research on this issue reveals differing perspectives on the need for and efficacy of Humanist chaplains.

The results of the interviews conducted for this research and the resulting dialogue allowed all twelve members of the process to fully understand the positions of both those who support and oppose Humanist chaplains in the Army. The main point for those who support Humanist chaplains is a desire for equal representation and diversity in the Army Chaplaincy. The major opposition to Humanist chaplains is the atheistic nature of NTLS Humanism. Opponents of Humanist chaplains ask, "How can an atheist serve as a chaplain and religious leader to a unit full of both religious and non-religious individuals?" Supporters of Humanist chaplains would respond, "Just like the Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist chaplains; we would perform or provide." "And what exactly is it that you would perform?" asks the opponent. Thus begins the dialogue.

Notes

1. Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (12 May 2015), http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/ (accessed 7 September 2015).

2. Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project, 28 June–9 July 2012, Q53-54, "'Nones' on the Rise," http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise-religion/ (accessed 4 April 2014).

3. In addition to submitting a request to become a DFGL for secular humanism, MAJ Ray Bradley also submitted a request to the Army to recognize Humanism as a religious preference on official military records. During the interview process for this research, MAJ Bradley mentioned that he received an email from The Chief of Chaplains Office informing him that Humanism would be an approved religious preference as of April 2014.

4. The no preference population, like the Pew research, most likely includes both theistic and non-theistic personnel.

Chapter 7
How Would Atheists Provide Religious Support?

The dialogue between the six humanists and six chaplains conducted for this study exposed the main issues preventing atheists from serving as Army chaplains and revealed the benefits Humanist chaplains would bring to the Army. While most agreed that Humanists, atheists, agnostics, and other non-religious personnel should have a place to gather to build community, there was disagreement regarding the religious aspects and purpose of this community and whether or not it would fall under the purview of the Chaplaincy. The discussion led to another question of whether or not non-theistic groups should have the same benefits as currently approved religious groups. Then one could ask if the non-theistic group would actually be considered a religious group, or would it more resemble a group or society like the Freemasons, the Kiwanis Club, or the Knights of Columbus? The interviews and resulting dialogue provided a starting point to find answers to these debatable questions. We begin with a question that lies at the heart of the matter.

How Can Non-Theistic Humanists Meet the Religious Needs of the Traditionally Theistic Religious Population?

A primary issue that arose throughout the interview process, and during informal discussions about the topic, was the ability and willingness of an atheist or agnostic to provide religious support to people who believe in God. Of the multitude of reasons for which Soldiers visit a chaplain, the most common include requests for counseling, prayer, and blessings. An additional religious expectation comes from the commander when he or she requests a ceremonial invocation. Three interview questions addressed how a Humanist chaplain would provide the religiously specific requests for prayer, blessings, and an invocation.

Responding to a Request for Prayer

"If a dying soldier asked for prayer, how would a Humanist chaplain respond?" This interview question garnered the most diverse responses from the Humanist participants. The most commonly agreed upon response was that a Humanist would not pray but would rather help guide the Soldier to pray according to his or her particular religion. Jason Torpy, president of the MAAF, suggested that a Humanist chaplain would be expected "to be as ready as any Buddhist or Mormon is to pray with any Muslim or Jew."[1] Since NTLS Humanists do not believe in praying to a God or gods, Jason Heap said,

> it would be inauthentic to the Humanist chaplain to be praying something anyway, and the last thing I'd hope the non-Humanist would see is the Humanist being false or engaging in "tokenism" as a form of "religious placebo."[2]

Therefore, to be authentically Humanist, another common response to the dying Soldier who asks for prayer was to find someone else who could pray with that Soldier. This is what AR 165-1 and FM 1-05 state as "providing" religious support rather than "performing" the religious practice.

The bottom line here is that it depends on the person and how comfortable he or she would feel in that situation. One Humanist may offer a prayer because it would be about the Soldier and helping him or her through their suffering. This response would be similar to a Christian choosing whether or not to recite a Muslim Kalimah, pray a Hindu prayer, or chant something that they do not believe. They may choose to put their religious convictions aside to minister to the person who is dying and suffering according to her or his faith tradition. To some it may appear as a blatant compromise, and to others it is an act of placing the needs of the Soldier ahead of one's own convictions.

Responding to a Request for a Blessing

A request for a blessing is not as acute as a dying Soldier's request for prayer, but it is a common religious request by Soldiers looking to have their home, an artifact, an impending operation, or meal blessed by God. Soldiers often ask for blessings for safety prior to conducting patrols. They may ask the chaplain to bless a memento or religious symbol while deployed in a combat zone. Oftentimes Catholic Soldiers ask for blessings in the absence of a Catholic priest and do not seem to mind if the chaplain who gives the blessing is not Catholic, as long as the blessing has a connection to the Divine. Because this is a common religious practice in the Army, the Humanists were asked, "How would a Humanist chaplain give a blessing?"

The answer to this question from five of the humanists can be summarized in the words of Jason Heap: "They wouldn't," but he immediately added that he would find someone who could. Harvard Humanist Chaplain Greg Epstein also stated that he would first find someone to conduct the blessing. If that was not possible, he along with the majority of the group suggested that they would take the religious meaning out of it and offer a secular option instead. Additional responses included wishing people good luck rather than giving a blessing and to simply "opt out" if giving a blessing would violate their conscience.

As with the response to a request for prayer, the Humanist chaplain could not "perform" a religious blessing; they would have to "provide" the religious support by finding another chaplain who could perform the religious act. If the population wanted words of inspiration, or if they wanted to discuss the philosophical and scientific meanings of objects and experiences, a Humanist chaplain could perform with success. However, it appears that the Humanist would have to locate another chaplain to conduct a religious blessing. An invocation however, is a different matter and more in line with the practice of NTLS Humanism.

Conducting an Invocation

The purpose of an invocation traditionally has been to invoke the presence of God on an event or ceremony, hence the term "invocation." Yet as Chaplain Epstein pointed out in his ministry at Harvard, he does invocations for interfaith groups all the time. Invocations have often been a source of tension in the Army as people have been chided for praying in Jesus' name or for being too denominational in their prayer. According to Epstein, he has received nothing but gratitude for the inclusive way he offers an invocation. He obviously does not invoke the presence of God, but he feels that the purpose of an invocation is to offer inspiration. In responding to the question, "How would a Humanist chaplain conduct an invocation?" Chaplain Epstein passionately responded,

> when you look around at a crowd of young Americans, and you know there are Christians, there are Jews, there are Buddhists, there are Hindus, there are Muslims, there are agnostics, there are atheists, and humanists and spiritual people. . . who is going to get up in front of all these people and say something that's going to help us all feel good, to feel calm, to feel reflective, to feel a sense of meaning and purpose? I would suggest that a Humanist, by saying something that acknowledges the difference between the people, but called on their common humanity, may be able to do that particular task just as well as anyone in the world.[3]

Epstein explained that he conducts invocations for diverse audiences in many ways such as through the use of poetry, meaningful music, or silent reflection. He says a Humanist chaplain, "can help a diverse group of people to reflect and be inspired by that which is most important to them."[4]

The traditional Army invocation may seem anachronistic to some, but as the meaning of words change, the term invocation may evolve into simply offering words of inspiration (if it has not done so already). Who would take issue with inspiration? *Esprit de corps* is a quality the Army

community seeks, and if a chaplain can bring everyone together by omitting religious, exclusive words and replacing them with words of inclusive inspiration, it would appear to be a win-win for all.

The only problem is that an invocation *is* religious, and at the present time, most Soldiers still appreciate when a chaplain acknowledges the presence and blessing of God on their lives. The non-religious may not be able to "opt out" of having to listen to the prayer, but if there is no God, then certainly there is no fear of God actually showing up at the event. A humanitarian or dignified response would not be to restrict a religious invocation but rather to allow those who desire God's presence to listen to a forty-five second prayer. At the rate that society is changing, the invocation will probably become a distant memory because it offends those who do not believe. Some atheists would rather that religious people practice atheism during a ceremony. The question then becomes, who would be more offended? The non-religious who have to listen to a forty-five second prayer or the religious who would not enjoy their religious freedom to invoke the presence of God? If history is any gauge, it will most likely be the former. Hence, Epstein may have it right with his all-inclusive inspirational "invocation." If this becomes the norm, then word "invocation" will be redefined right along with the word "religion," which would therefore include Humanism as a religion.

Notes

1. Jason Torpy, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 4 February 2014.

2. Jason Heap, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 26 February 2014.

3. Chaplain Greg Epstein, telephonic interview by author, 14 March 2014.

4. Chaplain Greg Epstein, telephonic interview by author, 14 March 2014.

Chapter 8
Is Humanism a Religion?

In order to answer this question, it is imperative to understand the Humanist population. Therefore, the question, "What are the religious needs of the non-theistic population?" will be the starting point to answer the greater question of whether or not Humanism is a religion. To begin answering this question, the humanist interview responses were analyzed to determine what aspects of NTLS Humanism are religious. As one might imagine, this proved to be the most controversial aspect of the discussion regarding whether or not the Army should have atheist chaplains. Disagreements on the definition of religion, the interpretation of the Constitution, and whether or not Humanism or humanism is a religion among the Humanist community led to a web of controversy begging to be untangled.

From a NTLS Humanist perspective, it may appear that the questions, "What are the religious or life stance requirements of Humanism?" and "What is sacred about Humanism?" are trick questions to reveal the non-religiousness of Humanism. On the contrary, the questions were designed to exegete the religious aspects of Humanism in order to juxtapose the responses with the Constitutional First Amendment, federal law, and DoD policy regarding the purpose of the Chaplaincy.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Constitution guarantees that Congress will not pass any laws to establish a religion or to prohibit its free exercise.[1] Federal law requires chaplains to hold appropriate religious services and to perform appropriate religious burial services. Neither the Constitution nor the United States Code (USC) defines exactly what is considered a religious service or religious burial service.

For the NTLS Humanist, regular gatherings and a burial are considered religious, because they involve sincerely held beliefs pertaining to the meaning and purpose of life. The gatherings and ceremonies that NTLS Humanists conduct are not simply like a club that gathers to discuss books, play chess, or study physics. They consider events such as a baby-naming ceremony or a wedding as religious, because they deal with one's life stance and the deeper meanings of how one develops values and contributes to humanity for good – good without God or gods. NTLS Humanists claim that just because people have a life stance that omits a God or gods, they should not be excluded as non-religious. Rather, they consider their beliefs to be non-theistic religious beliefs, and therefore are protected under the Constitution and should be able serve as chaplains under Title 10 of

the USC. So what exactly are the religious practices, or life stance requirements, that need protection under the First Amendment? What is sacred or religious about NTLS Humanism that needs religious support? These were some of the questions asked of the humanists. The answers to these questions revolved around human dignity and the value of human life.

The Humanist applicant for the Navy Chaplaincy, Jason Heap, directed his response toward the Humanist Manifesto(s) (see Appendix F for the most recent Manifesto), and suggested there are no requirements, but rather commonly held views. He explained that the Manifesto is open to debate, which means that the core values of Humanism continuously evolve as human knowledge and understanding of the world evolves. He explained that "religion" is a human construct to talk about what is commonly understood as "divine."[2]

Secular Humanist DFGL applicant Major Ray Bradley described life stance requirements as being determined by each person individually. What is considered a requirement for one person may not be a requirement for another, and like Heap, MAJ Bradley referred to the Humanist Manifesto as a guide. He clarified, "that the Manifesto is not a list of what Humanists must believe, but is a consensus of what Humanists do believe."[3]

Jason Torpy explained that the requirements of Humanism are non-dogmatic and therefore "requirements" is not the right term to use when discussing the religious aspects of Humanism.[4] He offered "human flourishing" as the ultimate core value for Humanists, and mentioned that human flourishing is "done from a nontheistic and naturalistic world view of scientific naturalism."[5] He also added "a skeptical approach to knowledge" as a primary tenet of Humanism, saying that a standard of evidence is applied before accepting a hypothesis.[6] To illustrate, he provided the following:

> For example, god doesn't exist until such time as sufficient evidence is provided, or what happened before the big bang is unknown and we would not say god did it simply to fill in the unanswered question.[7]

Torpy also lists "ethical and meaningful life" as a key tenet of Humanism as well as possessing a "questioning, progressive philosophy."[8]

Regarding the question about what Humanists consider sacred, they collectively remarked that human life is the most "sacred" aspect of Humanism. However, all the humanists agreed that the term "sacred" has no place in the world of Humanism. Chaplain Erwin Kamp, the Dutch Navy Humanist Chaplain, prefers the term "imprescriptible" to "sacred."[9] He

says our human dignity is imprescriptible. When asked about the religious practices for which Humanists want protection under the First Amendment, Greg Epstein most likely summed it up for all humanists when he said he wants to have the ability to openly discuss his religious beliefs and to gather with like-minded people. He said that if either of those were ever taken away that it "would destroy my freedom to be who I am and who I want to be."[10]

On the Harvard Humanist website, the Humanist Hub, a calendar of events shows an event on 13 January 2016 titled, "Harry Potter as a Sacred Text (Reading Group)." The event details pose the question, "What if we read the books we love as if they were sacred texts?"[11] This event clearly reveals that Humanists decide for themselves, individually, as to what is "sacred" or as to what things are important in life.

Gathering with like-minded people and having the freedom to openly discuss religious beliefs, to include what struck them about a Harry Potter book – these are the religious freedoms Humanists want protected under the First Amendment. These are also the needs for which Humanists want chaplain support. A Humanist Chaplain could help other Humanists develop ethical values and beliefs while also providing them a place to foster connections and build community with like-minded individuals. Just as the traditionally religious Soldiers have a confidential chaplain to whom they can discuss their issues, Humanists also want a confidential chaplain with whom they can discuss their significant life issues. There already are non-theistic counselors such as Military and Family Life Consultants (MFLC), social workers, and psychologists with whom non-theistic Soldiers can visit. These counselors are available to all Soldiers, but the problem with visiting these counselors is that the visit is not completely confidential. While the MFLC does not keep written records of counseling sessions, all of these counselors are mandated reporters – meaning that that the counselor would have to file a report if a counselee chose to disclose any indicators of harming someone to include self-harm. Additionally, the counselor may or may not be religious, and even if not, he or she may be non-theistic but not humanistic in his or her worldview. NTLS Humanists want to be able to counsel with another NTLS Humanist.

A chaplain who served at the Fort Leavenworth Joint Regional Correctional Facility, Chaplain (CPT) Jonathan Fisher, does not necessarily view Humanism as a religion, but strongly believes that Humanism, as well as other non-religious beliefs, should be treated with the same respect as religious beliefs. He says that having a Humanist chaplain in the Army today

> would help current Army chaplains understand how to better meet the needs of their non-religious/humanist, atheist, agnostic and other Soldiers/families by providing an internal subject matter expert resource.[12]

As a chaplain who worked with a literal captive audience, Chaplain Fisher recognizes that non-religious inmates cannot simply gather together and discuss their beliefs and values at will. Someone needs to facilitate that discussion, and he was happy to do it. In fact, he facilitated a weekly "Men of Reason" meeting which was open to everyone. Non-religious inmates could gather together to discuss their stresses, challenges, and life issues with like-minded individuals. A Humanist chaplain, according to Fisher, would also serve as that like-minded confidential counselor.

Having a like-minded counselor with whom to share life's stresses and challenges may be necessary, but according to some of the other chaplain interview responses, deeply held Humanistic beliefs are not considered religious and therefore do not fall under the First Amendment or bounds of the Army Chaplaincy. The term "religion" in their minds holds a supernatural, metaphysical, divine, or other transcendental meaning, not simply "sincerely or deeply held beliefs." Although commanders must accommodate such beliefs, they are not necessarily considered religious.[13]

The World Religions Chaplain at the Fort Leavenworth Command and General Staff College, Chaplain (MAJ) Seth George, agrees that confidential counseling is important to Soldiers. However, he explained,

> The soldier's right to religious freedom does not revolve around rights to counsel and comfort (though we try to provide this as part of our calling), nor is it a right of free speech or assembly as civilians have and enjoy. It is a right to the free expression of religion, which is both public and private worship with a Rabbi/Imam/Pastor/Priest etc.[14]

Chaplain George agrees that Humanists should be able to gather and build community, but not under the banner of religion. As discussed in Chapter 4, the US Code specifically states that the chaplain's primary responsibility is to hold weekly services.

The Army's first Buddhist Chaplain, Chaplain (CPT) Thomas Dyer III, has much to say about religion, especially considering that many Humanists compare their non-theistic beliefs to the non-theistic aspects of Buddhism. Similarly to Chaplain George, Chaplain Dyer believes Humanist groups should have protection and be able to meet for social forming and values development but not under a "religious Corps." He states,

> The practice and teaching of Religion should address issues of the after-life. For example Christianity, Islam, and Judaism have salvation, Buddhism has enlightenment, Hinduism has absorption, and Earth Center has union with the elements.[15]

Not all Buddhists are non-theistic; some do recognize a divine being or gods. For something to be called a religion, Dyer believes it should recognize more than simply science and reason. Neither George nor Dyer view Humanism as a religion, and for that matter neither do some humanists.

In September 2013, the Yale Chaplain's Office denied the Yale Humanist Community's application for membership in the Yale Religious Ministries. With Humanist Chaplaincies already at Harvard and Stanford, it seems strange that this Ivy League school denied the application. In an article on the Religious News Service website, the reason cited for rejection was because the group is "explicitly nonreligious."[16] Meghan Hamilton, an executive assistant for the American Humanist Association (AHA), agrees with this ruling saying,

> As humanists, atheists, agnostics, and/or non-believers, we have identified ourselves as possessing a lack of religious belief, no organization of religion, and we are not now, nor have ever been recognized by the religious community as a religious group; primarily because we are not religious, and do not seek to establish humanism as a religion. . . as we have established ourselves as promoters of social progression, the religious realm is not that place. Joining a ministry, a community of people where religious belief is required for membership, is counterproductive to our cause, which is ultimately exemplifying that one can be good without a god.[17]

Hamilton continues her disagreement by questioning why the Yale Humanist Community chose the religious community with which to associate rather than a Political, Cultural, or Community group, citing the religious choice was the most narrow of all choices. Evidently, not all Humanists want to be associated with religion or chaplains.

The Harvard Humanist webpage specifically describes their community as non-religious as stated in their mission: "We are a center for humanist life – a nonreligious community committed to the power of connection to help us do good and live well."[18] They purpose to live well using reason and dialogue, to determine ethical values, and to help one another evolve as they work to improve the world. With events such as book reading groups, guest speakers, comedians, and learning labs to help children

learn how to become moral citizens, the Humanist Hub provides many ways for the secular community to connect, grow, and serve. The focus clearly is not religious.

To complicate matters even more, the executive director of the Council for Secular Humanism, Tom Flynn, explained that he could not answer the interview questions as written, because the questions regarding Humanism were posed with a capital 'H.' He wrote,

> Within the atheist and humanist movement, Humanism is usually capitalized when referring to religious Humanism, the stance that views humanism as a religious or quasi-religious commitment. This is problematic for two reasons:
>
> 1) Most atheists and secular humanists are not religious Humanists, but instead believe their life stance falls outside the category of religion. Often they view their life stance as an alternative to all religions. Across the larger movement, religious Humanists are unique in viewing their life stance as religious.
>
> 2) Since much of the controversy over atheists and humanists serving as military chaplains has to do with the way that chaplaincy is seen as inherently religious, it stands to reason that a Humanist who is religious will approach questions of chaplaincy from an entirely different direction than a humanist or atheist who is not religious.[19]

Flynn's clarification on the matter helps the reader understand why there is division within the overall humanist community on whether or not humanism has a place in a religious Chaplaincy. The complex discussion about designating Humanism, secular humanism, or religious humanism as a religion makes for a convoluted argument that will not be resolved in the course of this study. It suffices to say that the issue is divided even within the internal ranks of other humanists. One may argue that Christians disagree on their particular beliefs also, but the difference is that they all believe in God, and they do not debate over whether or not the 'C' in Christian is capitalized.

The fact that this is a complex issue does not negate the possibility of Humanist Army chaplains; it simply means the dialogue needs to continue until a qualified candidate meets the DoD policy requirements or Congress decides the issue. The religious nature of Humanism is only one factor in the discussion. For several of the chaplains interviewed for this project, the focus centered not only on the religious aspects of Humanism but also the capability of Humanists to serve as religious leaders.

Notes

1. US Constitution, Amendment 1.
2. Heap, written interview.
3. MAJ Ray Bradley, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 27 February 2014.
4. Torpy, written interview.
5. Torpy, written interview.
6. Torpy, written interview.
7. Torpy, written interview.
8. Torpy, written interview.
9. Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Erwin Kamp, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 6 March 2014.
10. Chaplain Epstein, telephonic interview.
11. The Humanist Hub, "Upcoming Events," accessed 10 January 2016, http://www.humanisthub.org.
12. Chaplain (CPT) Jonathan Fisher, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 15 March 2014.
13. Department of Defense, *DoDI 1300.17*, dated 22 January 2014.
14. Chaplain (MAJ) Seth George, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 27 March 2014.
15. Chaplain (CPT) Thomas Dyer III, telephonic interview with author, 1 April 2014.
16. Kimberly Winston, "Yale's humanists lose bid for campus recognition," *Religious News Service*, (7 October 2013), http://www.religionnews.com/2013/10/07/yales-humanists-lose-bid-campus-recognition/ (accessed 17 April 2014).
17. Meghan Hamilton, "No – A Ministry Community Is Not A Place For Humanists," (17 October 2013), http://www.occuworld.org/news/357908 (accessed 15 April 2014).
18. The Humanist Hub, "About," http://www.humanisthub.org/about/.
19. Tom Flynn, email to author in response to interview questions, 25 February 2014.

Chapter 9
How Can an Atheist Serve as a Religious Leader?

Not only was the issue of asking, "Is Humanism a Religion?" a major discussion point in the dialogue, but the strategic look into the future and possible consequences of Humanist Army chaplains became another primary issue. Chaplain (COL) Ronald Thomas, the former Combined Arms Center Chaplain, and Chaplain (COL) John Read, the Southern Regional Medical Command Chaplain, both mentioned the issue of internal and external advisement in their interview responses. A Humanist chaplain could provide non-theistic counseling for Soldiers and serve as a Celebrant for non-religious weddings and funerals, but what about their ability to advise the command?

In addition to the requirement to provide comprehensive religious support, DoDD 1304.19 requires chaplains to provide commanders with advisement. The directive states that chaplains are

> to advise and assist commanders in the discharge of their responsibilities to provide for the free exercise of religion in the context of military service as guaranteed by the Constitution. . . and to serve as the principal advisors to commanders for all issues regarding the impact of religion on military operations.[1]

In order for the chaplain to provide religious advisement, he or she must have knowledge and experience in religion and its environment.

Chaplain Read chose to respond to the interview questions with additional questions that address the heart of religious advisement. He inquired as to the basis and foundation on which a Humanist would provide religious advisement. He posed the following questions:

> On or by what authority does one exercise a Humanist vocation? Where does the Chaplain Corps go to understand the authority by which the Humanist serves? Who is informing the Humanist chaplain? Self-informed? What kind of authority does a Humanist exercise to facilitate core capabilities (provide and advise)? Only personal? Or is he/she one part of a corporate entity? And what text or texts serve to identify with the Humanist corporate entity and who are the corpus leadership?[2]

Unfortunately, none of the Humanists chose to respond to any of those questions for the overall discussion; although Torpy did offer to discuss them in another forum. Chaplain Read's questions highlight the fact that

the characteristics of religious leadership and professionalism in the military are highly valued aspects of the Army Chaplain Corps – a Corps that does not take the responsibility of religious advisement lightly.

Even without direct responses to Chaplain Read's questions, it was evident that the level of knowledge from religious study is not a casual issue for the humanists interviewed for this research. For example, Chaplain Greg Epstein is not only the Vice President of the Harvard Chaplains, but he is ordained as a Humanist Rabbi from the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. His ordination was preceded by five years of study in both Jerusalem and the United States. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Chinese and a Master of Arts in Judaic Studies from the University of Michigan and has a Masters of Theological Studies from the Harvard Divinity School. Chaplain Epstein is also the author of the New York Times best-selling book, *Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe*.[3] Although the specifics were not answered from Chaplain Read's questions, one can presume that a Humanist Celebrant such as Chaplain Epstein would certainly meet the professional and religious requirements to provide religious advisement. However, the questions still remain as to what corporate entity and authority or authorities are Humanists responsible and accountable. If everyone can believe what they want to believe, individually based on their interpretation of the world in which they live, then from where do Humanists build their values and ethics? The Humanist Manifesto is a good place to start, but even that document is mutable.

In the answer to the original question, "How can an atheist serve as a religious leader?" a Humanist might respond, "the same way a Christian, Buddhist, or Muslim would." The crux of the issue (regardless of denomination) is the reputation and competence of the chaplain to serve as a religious leader. An atheist would most likely find it difficult to win acceptance in a predominantly Christian Army, but may in fact provide better advisement to her or his commander than some Christian chaplains. The bottom line is that it is not impossible for an atheist to serve as a religious leader in terms of capability and knowledge, but in today's Chaplaincy, it would most likely be quite difficult until that chaplain could prove him or herself as a competent religious advisor. At this particular time in history, it would probably take an extremely talented, confident, and charismatic atheist to serve as a religious leader in the US Army.

The other issue regarding religious leadership revolves around the federal law requiring chaplains to conduct weekly services. If an atheist cannot conduct the federally required weekly services, then it would be

difficult to serve as a religious leader regardless of intellect and experience. At least that is how the current policies are written. Policies support the law, and the law supports the Constitution. If Humanists want to redefine the purpose and lawful requirements of the Chaplaincy, then they will need to go through Congress. The other option is to operate outside of the Chaplain Corps.

Notes

1. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive 1304.19, Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Departments*, (11 June 2004), http://www.dtic. mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130419p.pdf (accessed 3 April 2014), 2.

2. Chaplain (COL) John Read, email to author in response to interview questions.

3. Humanist Community at Harvard, "Greg Epstein," http://harvardhumanist.org/greg-epstein/ (accessed 17 April 2014).

Chapter 10
Is the Chaplaincy Responsible for Non-Theistic Life Stance Groups?

To answer this question, one must first revisit the discussion on the purpose of the Chaplaincy from Chapter 4. The primary purpose for the Chaplain Corps is to provide religious support. The argument about whether or not Humanism is a religion and whether or not chaplains should support Humanism is not so much the issue but rather, what are the needs of this population that is asking for support? The Chaplain Corps does not exist for itself. In his final interview statement, Chaplain Thomas pointed out that the Corps exists to meet the needs of the Army family, not the needs of the chaplains. The Chaplain Corps does not simply look for ways to insert itself into the military but rather meets specific needs of the Soldiers whom it serves – religious needs. Therefore, if a need to support this NTLS Humanist group presents itself, the Army has a responsibility to respond to the request. If the needs are religious, then the Chaplaincy should support it, period. If the needs are not religious, then the Army must analyze the best proponent for this group.

Both the executive director for the Council for Secular Humanism and an executive assistant for the American Humanist Association agree that the Chaplaincy is no place for secular humanism. Even though Major Ray Bradley applied to be a secular humanist DFGL, he holds to the belief that secular humanism is a religion. This discrepancy among humanists makes it difficult to decide if secular humanists or religious humanists or Humanists with a capital 'H' all want the same basic rights, or if this one particular group – termed specifically for this research as Non-Theistic Life Stance Humanists – wants to be part of the Chaplaincy. It may be a moot point, but the differences make the discussion very confusing. Secular humanism means one thing to one humanist and something else to another. Some want chaplain representation and some absolutely do not. Where do we draw the line? How can someone decide if this group is religious even though some of them do not want a religious label?

All of the chaplains interviewed agreed that this group which is asking for chaplain support deserves a place at the Army table and should have some recognized representation. Major Bradley suggested the Army recognize this group with an incremental approach: first they should allow Soldiers to list Humanist as their religious preference on their professional military records, then they should bring on a few Humanist DFGLs, and then appoint Humanist chaplains after the culture becomes more

acclimated to Humanism as a religion.[1] According to correspondence from the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, the first step was approved in April 2014. The next step is to approve Humanist DRGLs.

When asked if the Army should have Humanist DFGLs, (now termed Distinctive Religious Group Leaders or DRGLs as of July 2015), Chaplain (LTC) Doyle Coffman, Deputy Installation Management Command Chaplain, commented

> Distinctive Faith Group Leaders (DFGLs) are an exception to policy when a Chaplain is un-available to perform a particular religious or sacramental function of a particular faith group. A definition of a DFGL is a non-chaplain religious worship leader. Two things have to be addressed: 1) Can the Supreme Court say that Secular Humanism is religious and will the laws change to remove humanistic thought from being taught in public schools as a part of the establishment clause? If not, they cannot be an exception to replace an Army Chaplain. 2) The primary function of a DFGL is for worship. Humanist DFGLs do not provide worship. They will provide instruction in the Humanist Manifesto. Again, I think there is a place in the Army for such instruction, but not through the Army Chaplaincy that is entrusted to ensure the free exercise of religion. I understand that they hold to certain humanistic ceremonies but that does not make them religious. The Masons have ceremonies that are conducted in their organization but do not consider themselves to be religious.[2]

The same problem arises when considering Humanist DRGLs as with the consideration for Humanist chaplains. Furthermore, Chaplain Coffman is correct in saying that the purpose of a DRGL is to provide worship, which again supports the federal law in Title 10 of the United States Code. The answer remains, if Congress wants to change the law, or if Humanists want to provide weekly services, then there may be an approval for a Humanist DRGL. It must be noted that Humanists already provide weekly assemblies and have non-theistic or non-religious services that help promote community and strengthen values and human flourishing. However, the services do not meet any religious "requirement." As discussed previously in Chapter 8, Humanists have important beliefs that are manifested in the way they choose to live, but there are no religious requirements. As Dutch Navy Chaplain Kamp suggested, human dignity is imprescriptible; there are no sacred requirements for Humanists. Humanist chaplains functionally provide comfort, encouragement, and ultimately promote human flourishing. These functions may be the intended result for university and

hospital chaplains, but these are not the lawful requirements of Army Chaplains.

Chaplain George notes that the Chaplain Corps could support Humanist chaplains if they develop religious requirements. He offers this resolution:

> As I understand Humanists, a life-stance is posited in which "Man is the measure of all things." If however, "man" becomes the object of Humanist worship, and certain practices or rites become necessary for Humanist soldiers who are facing the prospect of death and combat, then this question will resolve itself.[3]

Chaplain Dyer pointed out that Unitarian Universalist chaplains would gladly welcome, promote, and help build community for Humanists or humanists of any belief. They are already a part of the Chaplain Corps and are readily available to meet the needs of any atheist, agnostic, freethinker, or Humanist by providing non-theistic literature, a place to gather, and confidential counseling. Some other chaplains, such as Chaplain Fisher, would do the same. The issue is that a Unitarian Universalist may or may not be a Humanist. Unitarian Universalist chaplains wear a Christian cross on their uniform, which may steer a non-theist away from inquiring about assistance in building community. A Unitarian Universalist may indeed be a helpful resource for the NTLS Humanist population, but it is not the same as having a Humanist chaplain.

So if Humanists have religious needs (not requirements) that are not being met, who can best help meet those needs? Chaplain George offers an alternative to the DRGL or Chaplaincy: a Distinctive Community Group Leader, or a Distinctive Humanist Leader. A leader who is outside of the Chaplain Corps would most likely appeal to the full spectrum of Humanists and humanists as well as other non-religious personnel including non-humanistic atheists and agnostics. A Humanist chaplain would appeal to fellow NTLS Humanists, but maybe not to someone who is non-religious. Having a Distinctive Humanist Leader could meet the needs of both the non-religious and the NTLS religious population. This solution still raises the question, to whom would this leader be responsible? The Chaplaincy? Another branch? Only future research and data analysis will tell for sure, but one possibility is the Medical Service Corps under Behavioral Sciences. NTLS Humanism is, after all, based on science and reason.

Notes

1. MAJ Ray Bradley, email to author. 10 April 2014.
2. Chaplain (LTC) Doyle Coffman, written answers to author in response to interview questions, 18 March 2014.
3. Chaplain George, written interview.

Chapter 11
Should the US Army Have Atheist Chaplains?

Outside of the Army Chaplain Corps, religious chaplains and secular chaplains subsist in America. Religious chaplains are primarily associated with a particular religious faith-group or denomination that engages in ritualistic practices and bases its belief on sacred texts, traditions, and reason. Secular and Humanist chaplains are primarily associated with science, reason, ethics, and life stance issues who also engage in ritualistic practices. Some would call the secular group non-religious. However, one could use the second definition of "religion" from Dictionary.com for a non-theistic group or sect, which simply refers to "a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects."[1] According to this definition, NTLS Humanism is a religion.

Humanism in all its various strands and "denominations" is indeed a small percentage of the Army population that presently does not have a chaplain to represent their beliefs. The gentlemen interviewed for this project, who sincerely believe that Humanist chaplains would benefit the Army, made strong arguments for why the Army needs chaplains to represent this population. Moreover, those who oppose Humanist chaplains agree that this population deserves the opportunity to build community and develop values, but not in the religious realm.

With issues of sexual assault and suicide rates as high as they are, the Army senior leadership wants to do all it can to ensure the Army family has the ability to connect and stay connected to anyone and anything that helps build resiliency, morality, and values. Therefore, meeting the community needs of the NTLS Humanist population would seemingly enhance the spiritual and emotional health of this demographic.

One can certainly argue for the inclusion of NTLS Humanists into US Army Chaplaincy. However, the greatest obstacle appears to be the ability of said NTLS Humanist chaplains to perform religious support. If American society were similar to the Netherlands, this would not be an issue, given the fact that Humanist chaplains – such as Chaplain Erwin Kamp – already exist in the Dutch armed forces. Furthermore, the United States of America is predominantly Christian or theistic, and the Army reflects the beliefs of society. While the country is moving away from its Judeo-Christian roots and restricting more and more religious practices in public and on state-funded property, the majority of the United States is still predominantly theistic. How receptive would society be to atheist

chaplains leading American's sons and daughters into combat and as a unit's one and only religious leader?

As of today, no research shows the desires of American Soldiers regarding how well they would receive an atheist as their chaplain. Over time, this could possibly work in an evolving progressive, diverse, and tolerant (or perhaps more religiously intolerant) society. In 2016 however, the prospect of an atheist chaplain in the US Army, while not completely out of the realm of possibility, certainly seems improbable. Conversely, atheist chaplains at university campuses in America are indeed present to meet the needs of the non-religious student body, and Humanist communities at schools such as Harvard and Stanford are thriving. However, there is a major difference between the role of a chaplain at a university campus and that of an Army chaplain: the Army chaplain provides comprehensive religious support for all Soldiers in the unit. A Humanist chaplain at Harvard is not responsible for the religious needs of the Christian, Sikh, or Jewish populations at the university. The campus Chaplaincy has chaplains of various religions to meet the specific religious needs of each individual religion.

In a predominantly atheistic country, or on a college campus where each chaplain provides support for their particular religion, a Humanist chaplain would serve its community without question. In the United States, more than three-quarters of the Army's population is theistic, with only five percent of those Soldiers being non-Christian. It is one issue to be theistic and serve other theistic Soldiers of a different religion. It is altogether different for a non-theistic chaplain to serve Soldiers who believe in something beyond this present life. According to the statistics reported by the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers in Table 5, less than one percent of the Department of Defense claims to be non-theistic. Twenty-five percent claim no religious preference (NRP), so there may very well be more non-theistic personnel buried in that percentage. Until the Army uses an accurate method for collecting this demographic, the religious preferences represented in the NRP category will remain unknown.

Regardless of the statistical accuracy of the NRP designations, the data clearly shows a non-theistic population in the military, and according to Table 5, the non-theistic population is larger than any other non-Christian religion. If the reason for having Humanist chaplains was to meet the needs of the entire atheistic and agnostic population as described by the MAAF statistics showing "no chaplains for atheists," then it makes more sense to have some type of counselor or Celebrant to represent this demographic. It seems contradictory to say these atheists have no chaplains

when the goal is not to focus on the non-religious population but only the NTLS Humanist religious population. Nevertheless, the graph is accurate stating that atheists have no chaplain representation.

Meghan Hamilton of the American Humanist Association and Tom Flynn of the Council for Secular Humanism made it very clear why they believe secular humanism should not have any relationship with the Chaplain Corps or any organization that considers itself religious. Yet the MAAF statistics infer that a leader or representative for all non-theistic and non-religious personnel is warranted.

All Army chaplains – regardless of their religion – currently serve both their religious and non-religious Soldiers, and even though Unitarian Universalists already provide non-theistic life stance support for Humanists (all types), it raises the question, why is there such a push for NTLS Humanist chaplains? They do not conduct worship services or religious requirements, which is the legal basis for military chaplains. They would most likely have to find another chaplain to conduct prayers, blessings, invocations, and religious counseling. The religious support they would offer would only be for other Humanists. Furthermore, the First Amendment religious freedoms – under which NTLS Humanists want protection – address open discussion about their beliefs and gathering as a community. However, those freedoms pertain to secular rights under the First Amendment: freedom of speech and the right to assemble; they do not pertain to religion.

This study's conclusion comes down to two maxims that sum up the issue in the following equations: 1. Community + values ≠ religion. 2. Pastoral care – religion = Social Work. If the Chaplaincy focused only on comfort, counseling, encouragement, community, and values development, it would cease to be the Chaplaincy. The US Army Chaplaincy exists to provide comprehensive religious support. NTLS Humanism does not have any religious requirements or agreed upon religious practices. This fact sets them apart from those who do have religious requirements and practices.

Again I ask, what is the underlying reason that such a group would want to associate with those whom they think are misinformed, weak-minded believers in myth, magic, and lies? Why is there such a strong motivation to have Humanist chaplains in the Army? I believe the answer lies in a famous assertion by the philosopher Jacques Derrida: "there is nothing outside the text."

Incorrect understanding of Derrida's post-modern philosophy of deconstructionism may be precisely the reason why it is problematic to define specific terms such as "religion," "chaplain," and "humanist." In his book entitled *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* James K. A. Smith discusses Derrida's idea about the paramountcy of text, suggesting that the phrase simply means "everything is interpretation" and is understood from its context. He explains that rules must govern interpretation, and only rules that have been established by a community can properly govern interpretation. Smith writes that Derrida himself affirmed a type of "interpretation police," and therefore concluded that "communities fix contexts, and contexts determine meanings."[2]

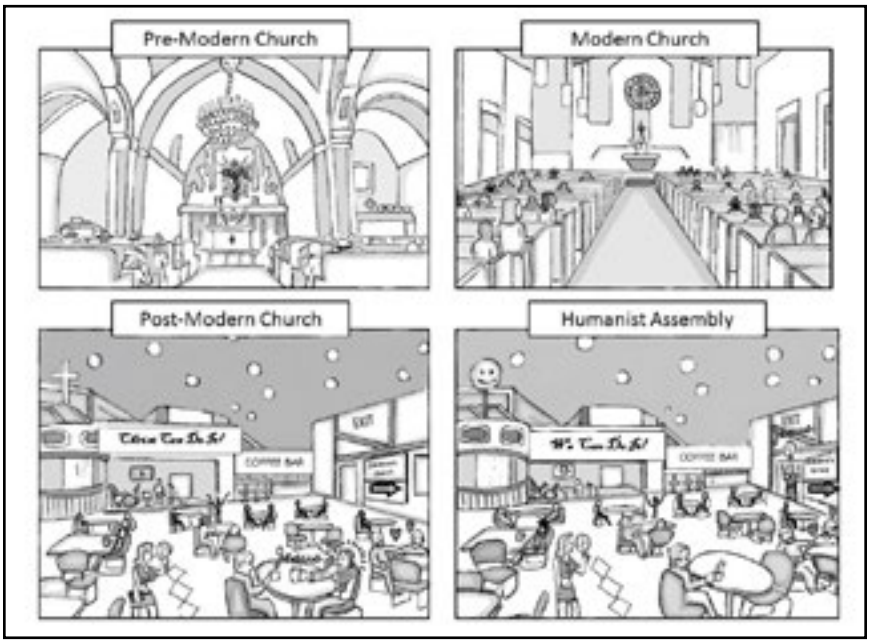

Figure 4: Humanism's striking resemblance to post-modern Christianity. Source: Chaplain (MAJ) Stephen Dicks, Editorial Cartoonist. Used with permission of the artist.

If communities ultimately determine meanings, it is no surprise that certain terms in America mean something different today than a generation or even a decade ago. Communities have redefined terms such as "gay" and "marriage," so it is no surprise that terms like "church," "religion," "invocation," and "chaplain" find themselves being deconstructed and given new definitions. The Army reflects society, and if society gives new context and new meanings to these words, then Humanists will

inevitably become chaplains in the Army. The interpretation police will certainly monitor the streets for violators and determine what is and is not acceptable.

I also concluded that another reason post-modernism influences the discussion of atheists in the military is because of the context of the post-modern church. I am not necessarily implying a pejorative view of the contemporary Christian church, but that its nature often resembles many of the same aspects of non-religious or community gatherings. Some contemporary churches use a seeker-sensitive paradigm that focuses on entertaining and socializing as a primary means of bringing "sheep into the fold." Folks can sit around a table drinking barista-served beverages while watching church on a big screen or TV monitor. They often sing about God as their buddy and friend rather than revering Him as an almighty, holy, sovereign King. Sin is downplayed, and love and mercy are ostensibly God's only attributes.

If building community is the primary purpose of the church, then Humanists should undeniably be guaranteed a place alongside religious organizations. It makes absolute sense why they view their beliefs as religious and want to be a part of the Chaplain Corps and relate equally to the greater religious community. In fact, the only visible difference between some post-modern churches and a Humanist assembly is the absence of God from the picture. Figure 1 on the previous page represents my view of the devolution of the church as it relates to Humanism. This is not my view of all contemporary Christian churches, but of those who place the human element as the central purpose of the church rather than worshipping Christ for His finished work on the Cross and resurrection from the dead.

Notes

1. Dictionary.com, "religion," http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/religion?s=t (accessed 9 April 2014).

2. James A. K. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 53.

Chapter 12
A Recommendation for Humanist Support Outside of the Chaplaincy

A cursory glance at the issue reveals a valid need not only for Humanist Celebrants but also for support for the secular and non-religious population as a whole. Therefore I recommend a secular approach to meeting this need in phases similar to the recommendation by Major Ray Bradley. A secular approach may not only meet the needs of the non-religious population, but provide religious Soldiers and family members the means to discuss their confidential issues with a non-religious counselor; they may prefer to attack their problems from a scientific perspective rather than a religious one.

One of the main problems I see with appointing Humanist Chaplains is that they would offer Soldiers a "secular option" when facing requests for religious support – such as for prayer or a blessing. Offering a secular option defeats the purpose of having religious support. It would probably not be very popular if a Christian offered a religious option to an atheist, so why would it be acceptable for an atheist to offer a Christian a secular option? This is why the Chaplaincy exists – to help Soldiers exercise their freedom of religion. Offering a secular option borders on proselytizing, yet atheists complain when a religious person offers a religious option. The point here is that Humanism is more compatible with secular or scientific support rather than religious support. If a Humanist chaplain only has the responsibility to support other Humanists, this would not be an issue, but an Army chaplain is responsible for the religious support of the entire unit. It would be much easier for a religious chaplain to offer non-religious support than for an atheist or Humanist chaplain to offer religious support.

Appointing Humanist chaplains would not solve the problem of meeting the needs for atheists, agnostics, and Humanists for two reasons. First, if the need truly is as great as presented by the Humanist groups who are advocating for chaplains, then appointing Humanist chaplains will take far too long to accommodate the need on every military installation. The requirements are too rigorous and incompatible with the non-theistic life stance function. Regardless of the reason, the applications for Humanist chaplains have been delayed; hence, another route may hasten the process.

Second, the title "Humanist chaplain" could possibly limit the scope of support with non-chaplain seeking Soldiers. Soldiers who list themselves as having no religious preference (NRP), or even nominally religious

Soldiers who associate chaplains with theistic beliefs, may be averse to visiting a "chaplain." Additionally, the term "Humanist" may also be confusing as it is still gaining momentum as a viable religious preference.

Instead of bringing non-religious or Humanist chaplains in the Army, I recommend that the Army create a new position for a Non-Religious Life Stance Leader (NRLSL) or simply a Humanist Leader or Celebrant. This leader would potentially have the same confidentiality as Military and Family Life Consultants who do not keep written records of counseling sessions.[1] The NRLSL would be obligated to meet the requirements for current Humanist Celebrants rather than the 72-hour seminary degree and two years of full-time paid pastoral experience required for chaplains. The NRLSL would also have the same opportunities as chaplains to hold services, assemblies, workshops, concerts, and events that would contribute to the morale and welfare of both the non-religious and NTLS Humanist populations. Rather than serving in the Chaplain Corps, I recommend a scientific approach by placing this position under The Medical Service Corps. This branch currently offers two areas of concentration under the Medical Functional Area of Behavioral Sciences: Social Work and Clinical Psychology. Because Humanism is based on science and empirical evidence, it seems most reasonable to develop a position for such a leader under this (scientific) branch. Because the primary religious needs of the Humanist population are to build community and develop values, Social Work seems to be the best fit for Humanists Celebrants.

As previously mentioned, the implementation of this new position should develop in phases. Initially, I recommend that the Army create a volunteer position under the Social Work area of concentration as a NRLSL patterned after the Chaplain DRGL position. This initial step would serve as a pilot study to determine how great the need actually is for such a representative. If the NRLSL should become overwhelmed with Soldier needs, the demand will be confirmed, and the Army could move into a second phase and designate a separate skill identifier – such as with the Master Resiliency Trainer for the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) program. An approved NRLSL would also help identify the non-religious spiritual aspect of this program for those who oppose the use of the term spiritual.[2] If the needs prove to be as demanding as Humanists predict, then the final phase in this process could be to create a separate area of concentration under the Behavior Sciences Medical Functional Area with a Non-Religious Life Stance Department.

The initial phase of this solution would also end the delay with the AFCB and the battle for congressional support for non-religious chaplains.

Furthermore, if Humanism would be considered a religion, the greatest danger is that it could be in jeopardy of violating the establishment clause as it could be recognized across the armed forces as a religion that is the default standard of care for Soldiers. Placing the position under the Medical Service Corps as a scientific position would avoid that possibility.

This conclusion does not eliminate a responsibility for chaplains to address the secular needs of the non-religious and Humanist population, because chaplains are responsible to provide moral and spiritual leadership to everyone. In addition to serving as the unit's religious leader, chaplains regularly minister to non-religious Soldiers by offering secular resources and counseling that avoids religious terms. Therefore, I recommend that all chaplains become more familiar with NTLS Humanism, and consider offering non-religious support by connecting these Soldiers to other like-minded individuals when possible. This option to connect like-minded individuals should be up to each individual chaplain, but it is important to note that connection helps avoid the trap of isolation – a trap that is often a common precursor to suicide.[3] Whatever means chaplains can use to help Soldiers stay connected will only benefit that Soldier, his or her family, and the unit. Chaplains provide opportunities for Soldiers to connect on a regular basis – Soldiers who hold vastly different religious beliefs than their own. Providing resources for Humanists to connect would simply be another step in building morale for this non-theistic population. Similar to connecting new parents or Soldiers who hail from the same town or alma mater, connecting like-minded Humanists can help them find the support and camaraderie that only come from those who hold to the same beliefs. For chaplains who are interested, the MAAF website offers a page specifically for chaplains to assist them in connecting this non-theistic and freethinking community.

Notes

1. Military and Family Life Consultants are a part of the Military and Family Life Counseling (MFLC) Program, which is a service of the MHN Government Services, https://www.mhngs.com/app/programsandservices/mflc_program.content.

2. The CSF2 program promotes five dimensions of strength: Social, Emotional, Family, Spiritual, and Physical. The Spiritual dimension in this program, as well as in the Army's Global Assessment Tool, has met with some resistance according to many atheist websites to include militaryatheist.org and the article entitled, "White House Addresses Military Spiritual Fitness Training" (24 September 2013), http://militaryatheists.org/news/2013/09/white-house-addresses-military-spiritual-fitness-training/ (accessed 22 April 2014).

3. Defense Suicide Prevention Office, "Suicide Warning Signs," http://www.suicideoutreach.org/AboutSuicide/WarningSigns.aspx (accessed 24 April 2014).

Chapter 13
What if Humanist Chaplains are Approved?

Let the reader understand, I believe the Chaplain Corps is not the ideal proponent for atheist or NTLS Humanist chaplains. Science should support science, and chaplains should support religion. However, if the American people and Congress decide that Humanist chaplains will integrate into the Army Chaplaincy, I have three recommendations. First, as with the previous recommendation, Humanist Celebrants should phase into the Chaplaincy with a volunteer position as a DRGL. This initial step would ease the population into the concept of non-theistic religion. It would also allow these Celebrants to reveal the value they bring to the Army as they help commanders provide comprehensive religious support in an even more comprehensive manner (or less comprehensive manner, depending on one's view of religious support). If the evidence reveals the value of this new type of religious leader, then the next obvious step is to appoint Humanist Chaplains.

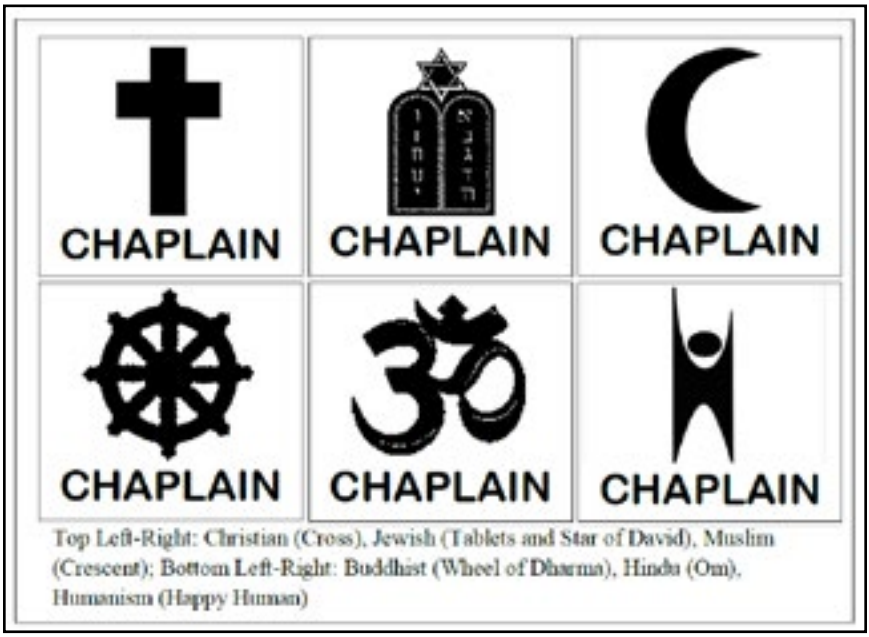

Figure 5: Suggested religious insignia on Chaplain Army Combat Uniform.
Source: Created by author.

Second, the chaplain branch insignia on the Army Combat Uniform should include the word "CHAPLAIN." If Humanists become a part

of the Chaplain Corps, they would most likely wear the Happy Human symbol as their branch insignia, as it is the approved emblem of belief for use on government headstones and markers.[1] Because the diversity of Chaplain insignia expands with the addition of each new religion to the Chaplain Corps – the most recent being a Hindu Chaplain – Soldiers may not understand what these symbols represent. Therefore, I recommend the Chaplain Corps change the branch insignia to include the word "CHAPLAIN" under the diverse symbols as a common identifier. Uninformed Soldiers may not recognize each individual symbol, but they will immediately recognize the presence of a chaplain. A suggested rendition is depicted in Figure 5 on the previous page.

Finally, with the addition of Humanist chaplains, the Army will either need to place them at the Garrison level to service the whole installation or begin approving requests for Christian DRGLs. If a deploying battalion had a Humanist chaplain, the unit would need a Christian DRGL, because an atheist cannot help Christians meet their religious requirements. Additionally, there is a chance that many religious Soldiers will simply not go to an atheist chaplain when they need counseling – and that is undoubtedly how chaplains spend most of their time. Therefore, the Soldiers will have to go to the Family Life chaplain or a sister battalion's theistic chaplain, which will ultimately place a greater burden on the supporting chaplains. Not only will their workload increase, but it will also reduce their availability to support their own Soldiers. Commanders will undoubtedly take umbrage with this arrangement. Hence, the way to ameliorate this situation is to designate the Humanist chaplain as the installation or division non-religious chaplain until the Army understands the scope of such a change.

As of this writing, the Army has not identified how many Soldiers would seek out a Humanist chaplain, nor has it identified how many would refuse Humanist chaplain support. Surveys to collect this data could help the Army better understand this apparent gap in religious support coverage.

Suggestions for Additional Research

One suggestion for future research is to conduct surveys across the Army to discover how Soldiers, commanders, and other chaplains would embrace or reject the possibility of appointing NTLS Humanist chaplains in the Army. The prospect of such a survey would take a talented wordsmith to accurately develop the questions to achieve the desired information. Explaining the idea of appointing Humanists, rather than simply atheists, is another hurdle researchers would have to clear. The data would

certainly reveal a more accurate representation of how "we the people" would react to such a change in the way chaplains conduct religious support.

Another suggestion for future research is to identify the reason for inaccurate religious preference demographics and recommend solutions to resolve this issue. Soldiers are not required to list a religious preference, and many probably choose not to list anything. However, it seems as if there is a fundamental flaw with the current process of collecting this information. It is unclear why the National Guard statistics show agnostics in their ranks, but the active duty number is zero. There should be a standard for collecting this data across all components. The fact that the Army does not accurately track agnostics reveals the complacency associated with equal treatment of non-theists. This is a primary complaint that organizations like the MAAF have with the apparent exclusion of non-theists in relation to majority religions.

Conclusion

Only time will tell what society and Congress will decide regarding federal law and policies authorizing atheists to serve as Army chaplains. And if that day comes, those who are in the Chaplain Corps will have to make a decision as to whether or not they will be able to continue to serve alongside non-theistic Humanists. The discussion came and went over the possibility of a mass chaplain exodus should the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy be repealed. The resulting exodus? Not many. Would the opposition be greater with the addition of Humanist chaplains? It is hard to tell, but those of us who were called into the ministry of the Army Chaplaincy would have to decide whether the calling was only momentary, or for as long as we have the opportunity to serve our country and its sons and daughters. I imagine that if Humanist chaplains were admitted to the Corps, then most of us would salute the flag and continue providing comprehensive religious support according to the tenets of our faith and with strong support from the endorsers we represent. We would respect one another, we would work collaboratively, and we would strive for excellence as we advise the command and perform or provide comprehensive religious support to the Army.

Notes

1. US Department of Veterans Affairs, “National Cemetery Administration,” http://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/emblems.asp (accessed 29 April 2014).

Glossary

Celebrant: Humanist Celebrants conduct humanist, nonreligious, and interreligious weddings, commitment/same-sex unions, memorials, baby namings, and other life cycle ceremonies. Humanist Celebrants are legally recognized in all states and worldwide, being accorded the same rights and privileges granted by law to traditional clergy.[1]

External Advisement: The chaplain advises the command on the specifics of the religious environment within their area of operations that may impact mission accomplishment. This can include indigenous religions in the area of operations, holy days that could impact military operations, and the significance of local religious leaders and structures.[2]

Internal Advisement: The chaplain is responsible for advising the command on the religious practices and requirements of Soldiers and authorized civilians within the command. This can include identifying holy days, specific worship requirements, dietary requirements, and wearing of religious garments.[3]

Non-theistic Life Stance Humanism: Author's own designation of the particular group of atheist Humanists who want Humanist chaplains in the military and consider Humanism as a religion.

"Nones": A religious demographic representing those who choose not to list a specific religious affiliation.

Religious Support: Those aspects of religious education, clergy counsel, pastoral care, authentic worship, and faith group expression that would otherwise be denied as a practical matter to Soldiers under the varied circumstances of military contingencies.[4]

Notes

1. Humanist-Society.org
2. Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 1-05, Religious Support* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-3.
3. Department of the Army, *FM 1-05*, 1-3.
4. Department of the Army, *FM 1-05*, 1-2.

Appendix A
Humanist Interview Questions

The following information was sent to participants in research for this study so they could preview the interview questions prior to the interview:

Please note that the term "religious" in "non-religious" instances has a transcendent connotation rather than simply a set of beliefs or practices. But feel free to discuss the term as you understand it.

1. What benefits would a Humanist chaplain bring to the Army?

2. What are the primary reasons the Army should or should not have Humanist chaplains?

3. What, if any, are the religious or lifestance requirements of Humanism?

4. What do Humanists consider as sacred? (or is there another term for "sacred"?)

5. Religious interaction questions – possibly similar responses for a-e

   a. How would non-religious chaplains minister to religious people?

   b. If a dying Soldier asked for prayer, how would a Humanist chaplain respond?

   c. How would a Humanist chaplain conduct an invocation?

   d. How would a Humanist chaplain give a blessing?

   e. How would a Humanist chaplain participate in an ecumenical program such as a Thanksgiving service?

6. What needs do a non-religious population have that religious chaplains cannot meet?

7. What else can the Army do to better accommodate the non-religious population?

8. How would the Army Chaplaincy have to change if Humanists were appointed to serve as Chaplains?

9. What one or two top issues would arise (if any) in having both religious and non-religious chaplains serving together?

10. Any other input not listed above for consideration on this topic?

Appendix B
Humanist Interview Responses

Interview questions and associated responses as asked by the Author (Val) to the following Humanist Leaders:

Jason Torpy (JT) President of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF) (Responded in writing through email)

MAJ Ray Bradley (RB) Applicant to become a US Army Secular Humanist DFGL (Responded in writing through email)

Jason Heap (JH) Applicant to become a US Navy Humanist Chaplain (Responded in writing through email)

Chaplain Greg Epstein (GE) Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University (Transcribed telephone interview)

Chaplain Erwin Kamp (EK) Dutch Navy Humanist Chaplain (Responded in writing through email)

Val: Please note that the term "religious" in "non-religious" instances has a transcendent connotation rather than simply a set of beliefs or practices. But feel free to discuss the term as you understand it.

Intro remarks:

JT: Overall, we're seeking equal standards and there are actual candidates under consideration. So for the purpose of discussion, please consider the Humanist Society as a prospective chaplain endorser or to Jason Heap as a potential chaplain candidate. When considering objections, obstacles, or questions to that endorser/chaplain combination, please consider whether that standard is applied to all other endorsers and military chaplains. That should eliminate most objections and allow us to focus on how to work together.

http://militaryatheists.org/news/2013/08/interfaith-leaders-support-humanist-chaplaincy/

Val: 1. What benefits would a Humanist chaplain bring to the Army?

JT: The primary benefit is to the candidate. Chaplains are not accessed to meet demographics or to fill a certain need. Those considerations are relevant, but they aren't primary. The best qualified candidate is selected. Federal Equal Opportunity Employment law and the job description of the position dictate. The candidate should not be discriminated against on the basis of his or her beliefs. The chaplain's job description requires a

certain endorsement and experience level that humanists can meet. So the benefit is a fair hiring process that provides the best candidate for the job.

Also, for the candidate, there is an opportunity to serve in the US military and in a profession that is concerned with personal welfare and values-based living. That is a benefit not only to an individual but to all those humanists who wish to dedicate their lives to such a profession.

The Department of Defense benefits by showing its commitment to diversity of belief and to including all service members regardless of their beliefs. In addition, they will have a valuable and formal connection to the humanist community to ensure that training, of all kinds, can include the humanist perspective. Currently, there is no such connection and training almost invariably ignores or misrepresents humanists and other nontheists. By including such a perspective, the DoD through its training will have a happier, healthier, more resilient, and more effective combat force.

Individual service members will benefit from having the best-qualified chaplain candidate.

Some humanists who have access to the humanist chaplain (and others who follow) will benefit from the humanist-specific counseling and support a humanist chaplain that only a humanist chaplain can provide.

RB: A Humanist chaplain would help connect the powerful resources and services of the Chaplaincy to Soldiers who are not religious. Many of these resources and services are not strictly sectarian. For example, Strong Bond events provide great opportunity for couples to reconnect after separations without regard for religiosity. Also, the Chaplaincy assists Soldiers with significant life events such as weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies. And chaplains avail themselves as counselors to Soldiers who seek solace during life's tragedies and challenges. However, in times of need, non-religious Soldiers will avoid seeking assistance through the Chaplaincy when they suspect their lack of faith is viewed as part of the problem. Just having a Humanist chaplain on staff will communicate to all Soldiers that they are welcomed regardless of faith. Conversely, not having a Humanist chaplain segregates the Army into those who are welcomed by the Chaplaincy and those who are not, despite the efforts to communicate otherwise. The benefit to the Army is a more effective Chaplaincy that reaches out to all Soldiers. Such inclusiveness can only improve morale and reduce stressors that lead to far greater problems.

JH: Firstly, there is an issue of diversity that needs to be met. An institution such as the US Army is a cross-section reflection of the society at-large. Although self-labelled 'Humanists' are a minority group, in terms of whatever can be broadly described as "religion" or "belief," they are, nonetheless, a bona fide group, no matter what numerical percentage or proportion of society. Basic foundational documents that underpin what we know of as "American" life, that our systems of government and civilization are based upon, are fairly straightforward in the notion that what is "America" is a unified group of differing people. The "dream" or "ideal" of "America" is part of a long and continuing struggle to reinterpret these ideals and values from the 1600s/1700s in light of changes within American society. Issues of social justice and social harmony that were at one time considered to be "wrong" (e.g., women voting, African-American men and women treated as equals, LGBTQ open pride and not hiding, relaxed and inclusive immigration policies) or "liberal" are now social norms, though it is fair to say that the birth pangs of each social change were difficult and born through struggle. To accept a non-theistic chaplain reaffirms and continues to legitimize even the most traditional of American ideals, though reinterpreted (as it always is and will be) through the lens of current experience. Ironically, to affirm and welcome a non-theistic chaplain is to actually "conserve" the traditional ideals, but in a "liberal" way.

Secondly, a Humanist brings a new perspective to the Army, thus adding to the enrichment of servicemen and servicewomen's experiences. The US military itself, like anything else in the world, is evolving. My "uncle" (I am adopted, so my adoptive mother's brother) was in the US Marine Corps during the Korean War. TA (Thomas Anthony) was considered to be of "low intelligence" by the standards of the USMC, and was funnelled into a program that destined him for the infantry. After some heavy tours of duty, he took an honourable discharge and then did the only thing he thought he was capable of: law enforcement. His son, however, also joined the USMC when he was a little older and I recall TA telling me that "It wasn't the leathernecks that I knew of," when he listened to his son's stories. Point being? The USMC changed and with its understanding of how people think, interact, etc., as well as the movement of US foreign policy and economic situations back home, the Corps' decisions changed the ethos of its environment and work, therefore providing others with different experiences than his father. Not just the Corps, but think of schools: *Back To the Future* and Marty McFly's dad's school is not the same kind of school and environment that you and

I learned in and attended! As the Army's understanding of its "membership" evolves, it too must move in different directions to provide enriching experiences that are different than before. The military is no longer seen as a place for substandard people who are only good for killing, marching, etc. In fact, the US Navy's "Fleet and Family" ethos demonstrates a different commitment to various facets of life beyond cleaning weapons and crawling under barbed wire.

Most importantly, to me, a Humanist chaplain meets the needs of identity. Yes, it is understood – for good reasons – that the military must move together as a cohesive unit, and a certain sense of the "self" must be forfeited in order that the individual becomes an integral part of the collective. This is directly related to the success of units, battalions, squadrons, platoons, armies, fleets, etc. However, these collectives are comprised of individual persons who are not drones or zombies, but living, thinking human beings with self-identity, dreams, hopes, aspirations, desires, commitments, etc. A sense of belonging or connection with someone "like me" or "who understands me" is a central need for a wholesome and healthy individual who then relates to others. To deny non-theistic people with that outlet makes them less of a person and interpersonally incomplete. I make the analogy of people being like a cash machine/ATM: you can't withdraw unless you've paid-in. As long as people feel as if their lives aren't being paid-into, the day will soon come when the cash machine of the individual and collective eventually comes back at bankrupt (or, in Martin Luther King's phrase, "insufficient funds" from the Bank of Justice). I am concerned that, without a Humanist chaplaincy presence in the military, it is pumping dry the well of goodwill and that has more negative knock-on effects down the line that will surface, perhaps at the least-opportune moment when it shouldn't be dealt with.

GE: I would like to think there are many benefits that one could bring to the Army. Among them are hopefully a passion for meeting the ethical and spiritual needs of a growing number of young people including, and as I understand it, a growing number of young military men and women who identify as secular or non-religious or humanist or atheist or agnostic but still have strong needs to consider the meaning of their lives and the meaning of their service to connect in community with other like-minded peers and colleagues and to reflect intentionally and an intensive way on the significance of their lives. A chaplain is someone who can facilitate those activities. It is somebody who can help a soldier or potentially even a family member of a soldier or whatever it might be – anybody that works on or around military life. A chaplain could help

that person to be a more active and full healthy functioning contributor to the life of that army institution in some of the same ways that a religious chaplain would help religious people. And also I would say that a humanist chaplain could potentially help religious people on an army base or an army unit of some kind, particularly those that were not as well served by some of the religious options available to them. A humanist chaplain is somebody that may not be coming from a specifically religious place, but its somebody who understands the need that different people feel for community and for meaning and for purpose for deep reflection and connection and could be potentially able to facilitate that for a fairly wide range of individuals.

EK: Freedom to choose for your own denomination for military, veterans, and their families (freedom of religion);

- counseling from a humanist perspective for military, veterans, and their families;
- humanist services instead of church services;
- giving commanders advice on humanization [and] meaning of [life] in the army

Val: 2. What are the primary reasons the Army should or should not have Humanist chaplains?

JT: The Army should have humanist chaplains because the Army has humanists. There are more humanists than any non-Christian denomination (see MAAF demographics page which lays out individual religious preferences. This is extrapolated from several sources but most specifically the DEOMI survey information. Feel free to confirm independently.)

But as I said, it's not about matching demographics. However, there is a big difference between absolutely no recognition or support and having even one humanist chaplain. That explicit inclusion and recognition will measurably improve the support given by the 5000 non-humanist chaplains who will then 1) know they have to support humanists equally and 2) will have someone "on the inside" to call.

http://militaryatheists.org/demographics/

RB: Instead of a Chaplaincy, say the Army created a well-funded organization for Soldiers to seek and obtain balance and harmony in their lives in order to promote morale and decrease stress-induced medical conditions. This organization is given many facilities and a large staff for its programs. It organizes fun and exciting events on base and throughout the community which are available to all Soldiers and their families.

Further, this organization is authorized to use all means of advertising and communications to promote its activities. However, only atheists are allowed to be staff members. And, to be qualified, leaders of this organization must not only be atheists, they must also hold a doctorate of science from only those universities approved by the highest leaders of the program. And all Soldiers must either affiliate with one of these universities or choose to be labeled as a "non-affiliate" on their official military records for every selection board, commander, and supervisor to see. Also, at the opening and closing of every program, mandatory ceremony, and command-sponsored event, a leader of this organization gives a brief speech filled with the wisdom of secular sages who prevailed against superstition and magical beliefs while glorifying humanity's scientific achievement and understanding of the natural universe from the Big Bang to human evolution. Without a Chaplaincy as an alternative, how would Christians feel about such an organization? Would they feel their needs are equally provided for by this organization? Or would they feel like an unwelcomed outsider without even the dignifying acknowledgement that there are any Christians in the Army, only "non-affiliates?" It's a trick question. But if asked, you'll understand the primary reason why the Army should have Humanist chaplains.

JH: Let's take these in bullet points, starting with "should:"

- The diversity issue (listed above) is key. There are already people in the US military who FREELY self-identify (because they finally have the "right" to do so!) as "Humanist." There is no reason to deny a group that has the right to self-identify with someone "like them."
- Having a Humanist chaplain demonstrates real, non-lip-service, commitment to our Constitutional ideals.
- The issue of identity, as mentioned above.
- Bringing in something new keeps things fresh. From what I am reading on the internet, the current situation with chaplaincy is much-of-a-muchness and a recycling of what is already there. New ideas bring new opportunities and advancement.
- It truly meets everyone's needs. To provide PROPER care and support to everyone, the military has chaplains from as broad a spectrum as possible. A Humanist chaplain could be the "go-to person" for non-theists in need of pastoral care who just don't want to talk to a believer of an organized religion.

Shouldn't:

- It challenges the status-quo, and people might not like the idea of change. Academic literature on "change leadership" demonstrates that there might be a large resistance to a new initiative when people feel as if they *must* do something rather than helping them see the benefits of the change.
- I have also read some opinions where "far left" people wish to abolish the whole idea of chaplains altogether in favour of a counsellor, as the connotation of the word "chaplain" drags up religious language.

GE: My understanding is that the army has reason to believe that the young people that it is currently recruiting – and will be recruiting in the future – are likely to look like the young people that spread out across the rest of the United States today which means that those young people are less religious as a generation than any other previous generation in American history, that American millennials are in very, very significant numbers seeking meaning and purpose and community outside of religious boundaries. And chaplains, in my understanding, are a part of army life in order to help soldiers cope with the tremendous existential crises and issues that they face on a day to day basis due to the fact that they are a soldier and that they work in the army which just presents obvious existential issues for anybody who works in it. And we need to provide options for people who everyday carry the burden of potentially giving their lives for their country. It's not enough to point this growing generation of people to psychologists. Psychologists are incredibly helpful. I would hope that psychologists are available for both religious and non religious soldiers, but psychologists only have so much that they can do about helping people to connect with a sense of community support that chaplains can help with. Psychologists are somewhat limited in helping people to determine the meaning and purpose of their lives, which is something that chaplains in my understanding work on. Either army chaplains are there to help people connect with a sense of community and meaning and purpose to life, or army chaplains are there to help people to connect with a certain religious belief. In the latter case I don't see how chaplains are justified at all in the army. In the former case I don't see how humanist chaplains can be excluded from that work.

EK: No primary reasons in the Netherlands!

Val: 3. What, if any, are the religious or lifestance requirements of Humanism?

JT: "Requirements" isn't exactly the right word. But I say that because we are non-dogmatic. "Freethinker" is a favorite term because the individual and individual liberty especially liberty of thought is highly-valued. (But Freethinker is sometimes avoided because we don't want to imply others can't think freely.)

That having been said, **human flourishing is the ultimate core-value**. Humanists seek human flourishing. "What is that?" is the obvious question, and that has lots of good answers, with answers potentially as different as those given by Christians about salvation in the Bible, probably less-so (but that's just because there are more self-identified Christians out there.)

The process of identifying human flourishing is done from **a nontheistic and naturalistic world view of scientific naturalism**. (This differs from some beliefs that have no god but would have supernatural concepts like karma or reincarnation.) What is and is-not supernatural is another question up for interpretation, but a humanist would never posit an explicitly supernatural hypothesis (e.g., it was a miracle, or god showed me the way, or acupuncture energy lines are beyond the natural world).

A key addition is a **skeptical approach to knowledge** which is to say non-existence and ignorance is the default position, just like in science. A standard of evidence is applied before accepting (or considering) any given hypothesis. For example, god doesn't exist until such time as sufficient evidence is provided, or what happened before the big bang is unknown and we would not say god did it simply to fill in the unanswered question.

With the skeptical and scientific world view and the ultimate value of human flourishing, we can live an **ethical and meaningful life**. Those actions which support human flourishing would be ethical and meaningful. And those actions which oppose human flourishing would be less/unethical and less/unmeaningful. This is obviously a long conversation and this is essentially what would be humanist "theology," if I understand it correctly. That would be starting with the humanist values and world view and ordering the world and one's life accordingly.

Like some beliefs and very unlike others, humanists are very interested in questioning even their ultimate values and world views and are continually trying to improve. In this sense, humanism is a **questioning, progressive philosophy** that grows and changes by design. Other beliefs are fundamentally conservative, raising up the answers rather than the

questions as most important and looking to the past rather than the future for answers.

Also see MAAF FAQ "What is Humanism All About" and related references.

http://militaryatheists.org/about/faqs/what-is-humanism-all-about/

RB: The requirements of Humanism are no different than the requirements of the many religions around the world; they are determined by the individual. Sure, many religions have doctrines that try to codify requirements. But all are subject to interpretation and are followed in differing ways often giving rise to a multitude of sects. However, Humanism embraces diversity and change, whereas most religions strive for solidarity and endurance in their beliefs. The Humanist Manifesto is a guide for many Humanists. The broad concepts this document expounds are far from requirements, though. In fact, the Humanist Manifesto has evolved through three versions beginning with the initial manifesto in 1933 through changes in 1973 to the current version written in 2003 and signed by 21 Nobel laureates. This latest version clearly points out that the manifesto is not a list of what Humanists **must** believe, but is a consensus of what Humanists **do** believe. It goes further than any religious document by acknowledging that societies change over time and with that change, Humanist values and ideals adapt to best maximize individual happiness and better lead to fulfilled lives. Willingness to adapt from experience and new knowledge sets Humanism apart from most religions and it is a critical reason why Humanists desire to congregate in order to share ideas and develop their understanding of what it means to be a Humanist.

JH: To me, one of the best things about Humanism is that it is non-prescriptive in terms of keeping "orthodoxy." In its expression in America, *The Humanist Manifesto III* has been carefully written in such a way to be as inclusive as possible and with a democratic ideal, it is an understanding that this is what "Humanists, for the most part affirm at X time." This means that, as humans evolve and our knowledge and understanding of the world evolves, so does the expression in the *Manifesto III*. This is a liberating feeling! It means that the core values of Humanism are subject to scientific principles of discussion, theorizing, searching for evidence, consensus-building, logic . . . all of the things that dogmatic and orthodoxy-desiring groups cannot achieve. This also means that there is an inclusivity within Humanism, rather than exclusivism because "You don't believe X, therefore you are outside the group."

Within the *Manifesto III*, there are certain ideals, though that, in my opinion (and this is wonderful . . . it's open to debate, because my opinion is my opinion and may not be shared by the next person who is also reading the same Manifesto!) are commonly-held views, though not "requirements:"

1. The acceptance of scientific methods as a way of coming to knowledge. This means that supernaturalism and myth are considered invalid, though it does not mean that they are unimportant things to consider; after all, "religion" is a human construct, and the language of religion is a human creation to talk about what is commonly understood as "divine." Humanists search for truth in things that can be tested and discussed in public forums, rather than shrouded in seclusion and a haze of myth.

2. Being open to as many views as possible. Again this connects with the scientific method. What's to say that my view is the best, or that my experience (or interpretation of experience) is any more valid than the next person's? Perhaps we are looking at the same "reality," but from different perspectives. Open discourse leads to a better and broader understanding between people, and being open keeps the conversation going, rather than searching for "the" answer.

Ethical living of the individual in relation to others. Let's face it: if I screw it up, it's MY doing. Yes, there may be factors that impacted upon my screwing something up, but it's ultimately on my shoulders to do something about it. It isn't a live-for-now ethic, but rather a realization that I am in charge of my own life and its decisions. If I'm ashamed with the outcomes of something I have done, it's my responsibility to put it right and to do so as quickly as possible because there is no afterlife when it'll all be wonderful and warm/fuzzy. People's feelings are real and they are real today. The consequences of our life choices on the natural world are real and we are seeing this today. If a need is discovered and I am in a position to do so now, then now is the best time to take action. See what I mean? I do not want to be 80 years old, and then look back on my life with regrets. When it's my time to go, I'd like to do so with a sense of dignity, knowing that I did the best I could with what I had. If an opportunity is lost, then on my head so be it. This ethic is one that mixes strength with debasement at the same time: it means that I am an empowered individual, and at the same time, I am responsible for what I do with this empowerment when I relate to others and the world around me.

GE: This is an interesting question because we know that religions have many rites and ordinances and prescriptions that they make about what people are supposed to do and not do, but we also know that the average religious person doesn't follow those. If you have a Catholic chaplain or an orthodox Jewish chaplain or an evangelical chaplain on an army base talking to soldiers who are nominally Catholic or nominally Jewish or nominally Protestant, I would suggest that those chaplains are most likely not spending the majority of their time prescribing and making a checklist of what religious behaviors these people are and are not doing. Because if they were, I would strongly suspect that they would find that most soldiers are like most people: somewhat religious but not following all the commandments and precepts in their holy book. And so for Humanists, I think that there is a sense that the basic tenets of humanism are really quite simple, but then the nuances of what it is to be a good humanist are quite complicated, and we debate them at every moment – in some of the same ways as religious people debate what it is to be a good religious person. Simple parts of what it is to be a good humanist are to use our human reason and our compassion to live lives that are healthy for ourselves and healthy for our loved ones and healthy for society and the world as a whole. That we follow basic ethics and basic laws that suggest that we are at liberty to take life or to harm others without a tremendous amount of justification for the fact that we would be doing a filling of self defense and in the interest of saving the lives of our country/people and our loved ones. So we value human life as sacred unto itself, that our time here in this world is all we have and know, and so every moment of it, every life is precious and caring, and compassionate instruction is all we have until it is to be treated as the ultimate end unto itself. But what it means to care about people, what it means to connect with people, what it means to treat people with dignity and ethics – this is something we debate and discuss constantly – again, in some of the same ways religious people often dialogue and debate with one another about what it is to be a good person. You got Christians that fundamentally disagree with one another on important ethical and practical issues. You got Jews and Muslims and Hindus and Buddhist that do so as well and same with humanists.

EK: Anyone who values self-determination, equality, responsibility, tolerance, solidarity, fairness and justice, and recognizes these from the bottom of his heart, can call himself a humanist.

There are some points that most humanists have in common:

- They give each individual a decent life

- They reject any form of fundamentalism or of opinion forced off
- They consider democracy as the optimal form of government and a guarantee against abuse of power
- They are in principle in favor of the separation of church and state
- They reject discrimination on grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and belief
- They are a tolerant society based on shared values, but also provide space to fill in their own responsibilities
- They stand up for equal treatment where humanists who are disadvantaged compared to other philosophical orientations
- They do everything possible to make training and education as accessible as possible
- They come out openly for their humanistic beliefs and are about ready to debate
- They recognize that doubt and reviewing your opinion is always possible, as a result of new information or experiences.

Val: 4. What do Humanists consider as sacred? (or is there another term for "sacred?")

JT: Sacred probably isn't the right term, especially if it's meant more like "sacrosanct" or untouchable. But if you mean most important and most meaningful, it would be the "questioning, progressive philosophy" portion in question 3. Persisting in delusion for personal comfort (in grief or daily life) might be considered anti-humanist as much as any "cardinal sin."

This is a good point to note that, for example, it would be anti-humanist to tell the grieving Newtown mother that their child was actually living in heaven and looking down on her. A humanist would consider this a comfortable but false and ultimately hollow myth. But a humanist chaplain would be aware and supportive of that mother in crisis and incorporate her world view without hesitation or even regret. In that time of trouble, her values and beliefs are accessible and it would be entirely humanist in that situation to help her rely on her beliefs (even if different than the chaplain's) for acute-trauma recovery.

RB: "Sacred" is by definition a spiritual word as it invokes worship and devotion to a deity. Therefore, it has no place other than allegory in the world of Humanism. However, Humanist place a very high value on knowledge derived from observation, experience, and rational analysis. The process for obtaining knowledge this way is venerated and so might

equate to a religious person's understanding of sacred. Additionally, human compassion is held with similar regard. But Humanists place no such value on particular places, relics, or symbols.

JH: Nothing "sacred," but I would think that Humanists have high regard and respect for ideals and ethics. I think that the progression of humans, overall, would be the closest thing to "sacred" but not with deistic fervour about it. Without a connection to a deity or some other supernatural feeling, Humanists are passionate about life, knowing and understanding our world, seeing people improve, watching justice be delivered to an oppressed group, seeing people have dreams to improve something and then watching it happen. I oftentimes feel a sense of "amazement" at something new – technology, for instance, or some new discovery – that demonstrates a talent and ability inside people, but I don't go away and thank god that he/she/it/whatever gave people this ability to make this discovery possible.

Val asks: What would be your religious practices protected under the first amendment? Practices we don't want taken away by the government.

GE: Freethinking in community is in itself an equivalent of a religious practice for a humanist. In other words my ability to think out loud and to talk about the meaning of my life in as open an honest a way as I possibly can – including exploring ideas about my life that some very religious people would consider to be blasphemous, because I do believe that my life is limited to between my birth and my death, and that others lives are as well, and my ability to talk about that in company of others and to express my feelings about my life and others' lives in an honest way in an open way in the company of peers. That's something – that if that right were to ever be taken away from me – my right to assert that I am part of a community of people that calls itself humanist or secular or freethinking or whatever kind of community, and that we have this common belief – this common story, this common understanding of the significance of our lives, that our beliefs motivate us to serve the institutions that we serve and to live the lives that we live. If that ability was ever to be curtailed or taken from me or if I were ever to face discrimination because I wanted to gather with like-minded people in whatever means of my choice, then that would basically ruin my life. That would destroy my freedom to be who I am and who I want to be.

Val: That would be freedom of assembly I think right?

GE: But its freedom of conscience though. From a humanist worldview there is no one particular formula like the equivalent of a prayer that I would need to say. There is no one particular ritual that I must perform in order to be a good person, but there are any number of things that I might want to say out loud, things I might want to express, things that I might want to share with another person – a ceremony that I might want to hold, whether it's a humanist wedding, funeral, baby-naming ceremony, whatever it might be. There are just so many different possibilities of ways that I might choose to express myself humanistically, where I am just expressing my strong convictions and beliefs. And I need protection from discrimination in doing so, that if I was a Christian soldier and I were to say "look I'm a passionate Christian. I wear this cross, and I'm serving my country and potentially dying for my country because I believe in Jesus." If somebody else were to come along and say, "you can't be part of a community that believes that" or that "I denigrate your right to believe that," "I denigrate you because you believe that." They could potentially ruin my life and it's the same thing for me if I'm a humanist soldier I would think.

EK: A better word is: imprescriptible

Imprescriptible is our human dignity

5. Religious interaction questions – possibly similar responses for a-e

5a. How would non-religious chaplains minister to religious people?

JT: The same way a good Christian chaplain ministers to a Muslim or a Buddhist ministers to a Christian. (It all comes down to applying equal standards. We're no more different than Christians than Buddhists are different than Muslims, so this managing different beliefs is a fundamental part of chaplaincy.)

RB: How do different Christian chaplains minister to a Jew or a Muslim or a Buddhist?

JH: First and foremost, a trained pastoral caregiver is a trained professional: ministry and care-giving is "ministry" and "care-giving," with the exception of the removal of the theistic language. 3 influential works I read at the MDiv program: *The Theology for the Social Gospel* (Walter Rauschenbusch; New York City Baptist minister in the early 1900s, near Hell's Kitchen), *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (Ernst Troeltsch, 19th century German sociologist), and *The Social Teachings of the Black Churches* (Peter Parish, late 20th century scholar of African-American theology). Bottom line for each of these works: human

beings' social needs as a precursor to any "religious experience." In other words, if I'm hungry or tired or despondent or . . . then why would you think I'm in any way interested in hearing you talk about a set of theological platitudes? An effective pastoral caregiver searches for the common denominator linking all of us – the human condition – and does whatever is necessary to meet these needs before going down the route of theology.

On the other hand, let's assume that everything is "ok" with the exception of the theological bit. Here again, a chaplain as a professional caregiver is there to initiate and conduct pastoral conversations. A wholesome pastoral conversation, by psychological definition, does not mean the caregiver becomes the source of the answer. On the contrary, it is about helping people to put themselves back together again. Psychiatric and psychological help requires specialist training, but the pastoral caregiver helps the "client" (for lack of better word) to work towards self-healing. Sometimes, it involves "listening love" (Paul Tillich), other times it might mean to challenge a way of thinking or providing alternative views to a pronounced problem, other times it might mean helping that person access another person or service to bring a solution to the problem (e.g., back to "Fleet and Family" in the Navy).

GE: I think that there might be some similar answers to how a religious chaplain of one denomination or religion might be able to serve a religious soldier of another denomination or religion in the sense that I would think that it would start with being a person who was trained to be a helpful and effective listener and who is trained in being able to help others to reflect on how to make meaning/make sense of the meaning of their lives. So a non-religious or humanist chaplain sitting with a religious soldier, I think, would honor whatever religious worldview that soldier was deeply convinced of that allowed that soldier to be a good person and to help others and serve his or her country.

EK: As equal and a colleague

Val: 5b. If a dying Soldier asked for prayer, how would a Humanist chaplain respond?

JT: As an endorser, I would expect our chaplains to be well-versed in and ready to guide the individual in prayer. If the situation dictated, the humanist chaplain might offer that he/she himself is not actually praying because the humanist doesn't believe like the Soldier. But mostly, it would be a matter of offering something in the tradition of the individual,

and I would expect our chaplains to be as ready as any Buddhist or Mormon is to pray with any Muslim or Jew.

RB: As a compassionate human being as would all chaplains regardless of their particular faith.

JH: Being authentic to oneself is a key Humanist value. As a Humanist chaplain, I would not pray for the soldier but I would certainly help **lead** the soldier in prayer, or facilitate a provision for that particular soldier's religious tradition (imagine, for example, a non-Roman Catholic chaplain trying to give *extreme unction*!). Assuming the Humanist chaplain is trained in institutional ministry, they should have a working understanding of the religious traditions and beliefs of the soldier well enough to be able to help them reflect on them. Again, this is effective pastoral care-giving where it empowers the person who has come for help, rather than disempowering the person by taking on a role of "religious superiority or authoritarianism." Besides, it would be inauthentic to the Humanist chaplain to be praying something anyway, and the last thing I'd hope the non-Humanist would see is the Humanist being false or engaging in "tokenism" as a form of "religious placebo."

GE: If a soldier deeply wanted to pray then a humanist chaplain would do whatever he or she could to help that soldier to pray in the way that the soldier wanted. So a humanist chaplain could help a soldier look up or study what kind of prayer he or she wanted to recite. A humanist chaplain could be well educated about what kinds of prayers soldiers might want to say and again be able to help them recite that or look through it. A humanist chaplain could help a soldier find somebody to pray with in the way he or she wished. A humanist chaplain might not choose to consult, pray for, or with that soldier in exactly the same way that he or she wished, because the humanist chaplain himself would have a conviction to say what he or she believes and believe what he or she says, but that person could do a wide, wide range of things to facilitate the prayer of the soldier that was committed to praying.

EK: Stay with him and if possible search for a Christian chaplain. If not available ask a Christian military [person] to pray.

Val: 5c. How would a Humanist chaplain conduct an invocation?

JT: First a note. Some Christians have been offended at Humanists who offer an "invocation" because we are "invoking" no god. So as we go forward, we may choose to offer an "inspiration" (or a "reflection" rather than a "benediction"). But we would rely on our theistic counterparts to

choose their comfort level because either term would be ok for a humanist.

But the direct answer is that we would offer inspirational words applicable to the situation that would most likely be entirely secular and not even explicitly humanist. In a very real sense, believers (should) tailor their words and account for the audience and the situation; and a humanist would do the same.

If it were a private event, then the honoree would choose a chaplain that could meet the honoree's wishes (which in some cases might be a humanist chaplain and not a Christian.)

The topic of ceremonial deism and prayer at official government functions is more of a political topic, but suffice it to say that everyone will acquire better perspectives on the issue when a humanist is at the podium and not just an unbroken line of Christians.

RB: That's like asking a Catholic priest how he would conduct an incantation or spell. It's not part of their repertoire. A Humanist chaplain might offer inspiring words or a thoughtful message, though.

JH: In short, I don't think they would. Invocation? Invoking what? God? Animist presence out of a leaf? I somehow think that a Humanist doing this would actually cause problems and offend people: Humanists and theists alike.

In the various funerals I have conducted since leaving "the parish," I tend to use silent reflections in place of an "invocation." However, I also try to be as inclusive as possible, and if I know there are people of certain religious traditions there, I ask them to pray within themselves in whatever way is most meaningful and relevant to them. For instance, at my father-in-law's recent funeral, during the moment of silence and reflection on his life and its achievements, I knew there were Christians who were present. I asked them to use this time to remember his life and to give a prayer of thanksgiving for being able to have friends, for being able to be known to others and so forth. This way, I didn't completely overlook the diversity within the funeral's attendance, but as my father-in-law wanted a religion-less funeral, it was respectful to his wishes without cutting out people.

I suppose, though, that if I was in a situation that was a private gathering like a funeral of a Muslim (as an example), I'd find someone from within that community to lead the others in whatever their tradition says is respectful and appropriate. I can't exactly say an Islamic dua'a if I'm not a

Muslim, so, as a good facilitator, I'll find someone who is, out of respect. Not only is this respectful to the religious needs of the people, it's also good public relations for Humanism as effective and considerate caregivers because we do care about the feelings of people and do not wish to give the wrong impression that we disrespect or denigrate religion, as that is not what we stand for.

GE: I do those all the time, and Humanist chaplains do those all the time. An invocation can very easily be a non-theistic call to a diverse group of people to reflect on and be faithful to that which is of ultimate concern to each one of us and to all of us as a whole. There are just so many ways – whether through poetry, or prose, or meaningful music, or through silent meditation, silent reflection – that a Humanist chaplain can – and really do all the time – can help a diverse group of people to reflect and be inspired by that which is most important to them. I've done this for interfaith groups of hundreds even thousands of people many times before and heard really just nothing but gratitude from people that weren't sure if there was anybody that could say anything that would be meaningful to a diverse audience. Because nowadays, when you're talking about young Americans, you just know – you look around at a crowd of young Americans and you know, wow, there are Christians, there are Jews, there are Buddhists, there are Hindus, there are Muslims, there are agnostics, there are atheists, and humanists, and spiritual people. Who is going to get up in front of all these people and say something that's going to help us all feel good – to feel calm, to feel reflective, to feel a sense of meaning and purpose? And I would suggest that a Humanist, by saying something that acknowledges the difference between the people, but called on their common humanity, may be able to do that particular task just as well as anyone in the world.

EK: Inapplicable

Val: 5d. How would a Humanist chaplain give a blessing?

JT: I'm not sure I understand the context exactly, so please clarify if I don't hit it.

The military and military commanders should never require a blessing. But commanders do occasionally invite a chaplain to bless something, and the chaplain does so according to their personal faith tradition. Humanists would do the same. Our action would most likely be inspirational words with no implication of divine oversight. Again, this is no different than what a naturalistic Buddhist or UU would do now. If there were an official government blessing text, a humanist chaplain

may be willing to deliver that (though it seems like such secularized government prayers offend religion).

In any case, the bottom line is that chaplains are never required to perform a "religious" act that violates their conscience, and a blessing would always be within that sphere and the chaplain would opt in or opt out just like any Christian or Jewish chaplain would now.

RB: "Blessing" can be used in many different contexts. In addition to the literal consecration, it can mean giving thanks, a measure of happiness, or approval. Despite the context, a Humanist chaplain would offer a secular option for the occasion.

JH: Again, in short, we wouldn't. Similar to my answers in 5c, above, I would find someone from within that tradition who would. On the flip side, though, there is nothing wrong with changing a "blessing" to a moment of celebration, especially if it is to mark a special event or date, such as a wedding, anniversary, promotion, etc. Again, drawing on my previous work as a trained Christian minister, "blessings" are a ceremony of recognizing some important event, but covered with some theological words. Seriously. . . think about it: births, naming ceremonies, confirmation, first Communion, baptism (whether infant, adult or se-baptism), weddings, funerals, "rededication" ceremonies . . . all of these ceremonies are marking special rites of passage in life and have been glossed with some religious words, symbols, actions/rituals, etc. to make them a "blessing." Take away the religious overtone, and what do you have? . . . important events in human life. Different cultures recognize and celebrate them in different ways, bar the theological discourse surrounding these events.

GE: There are a couple different pieces of the answer to this question. Number 1, for if a soldier truly wanted a religious and theistic blessing on a house or a meal or whatever, then a humanist chaplain would help facilitate that in the same way that – say a soldier was a devout orthodox Jew but really liked the Catholic chaplain and didn't have access at that moment to an orthodox Jewish chaplain. I think that the Catholic chaplain could help that soldier to either feel a sense of meaning or purpose around his meal or his home or whatever it was, but wouldn't be able to say the exact prayer in the exact way that would give that soldier a sense of fulfilling his exact religious belief. It's sort of similar with a Humanist chaplain, where if I was serving and an evangelical soldier wanted a blessing, I'm not going to go there and say the Lord's prayer, but I might go and help that soldier find somebody who could say the exact prayer

that they wanted in the exact way that they wanted. And I would have training and knowledge of how to help that soldier look so that he didn't feel that he had to look around alone for the right person to give him the exact blessing that he wanted. With that being said, there's also another way to look at blessings which is: there is a great deal that one can do for most people in terms of saying meaningful words that help a soldier to reflect on the meaning of his or her experience. So sometimes a blessing can simply mean a deep reflective expression of the significance of a moment, the significance of a symbol, the significance of a meal, anything like that. There are words of comfort that can be offered, there are words of inspiration, there are words of praise and acknowledgement that are just as available in short poetic form to Humanists as to a religious chaplain.

EK: We do not give blessings, we wish people good luck

Val: 5e. How would a Humanist chaplain participate in an ecumenical program such as a Thanksgiving service?

JT: It depends on whether the organizer and the event are interested in nontheistic diversity. If we're invited to offer our kind of invocation/inspiration, then most likely we would participate. If the intent is to only include those who pray to a god, then we would respectfully do something else that day.

The important thing is to ensure that such services are properly labeled as god-only or for everyone. There is a pervasive misconception in the military that prayers to a god include everyone, and it's not true.

And it's not outside the realm of possibility that we might have a humanist Thanksgiving service that includes readings from the time about humans overcoming hardship, thanks being giving even through times of suffering, negative stories of exploitation and discrimination, the reasons for violent conflict, and how it affects humanity today, for example. There would be time for contemplation and reflection, potentially songs and rituals to commemorate the time, but prayer wouldn't be part of our program. (In the military context, we would avoid dwelling on our perceptions of how prayer and religion affected the human condition at the time.)

RB: First, I wasn't aware that Thanksgiving was ecumenical. So let's use a Christmas program, instead. Then I ask, how does a Muslim participate in such program? How do you participate in Ramadan? Hopefully, you do so by respectful acknowledgement and, when appropriate, the enjoyment of the rites and traditions of different religions. I often reflect on

the enjoyable experience I had at the bairam during Eid al-Adha with the Egyptian Army in Afghanistan. I would like to think chaplains, too, enjoy such collegial opportunities.

JH: The wonderful thing about ecumenism is that it is an opportunity for Christians to stop bickering with each other over theological differences and start to focus on what they have in common. Too much of the history of Christianity has been about who believes what and who follows whom, rather than the "spirit" of the message. The Jesus of history is, in my opinion, a different man than the Christ of faith and if he was alive and able to read about the history of Christianity he'd probably say, "They didn't get what I was saying, did they?" Although not a Christian, Humanists have every reason to be at an ecumenical celebration. Talk about social work that the groups have done together. Maybe they've done something like Habitat For Humanity, or something with a soup kitchen for the homeless, or raised money for flooding victims. Focus on the work of collective labour and the Humanist chaplain can provide strong encouragement and praise for the communities who have worked together. Make the message clear that collaborative work accomplishes more than fragmentation. Here is a perfect opportunity for the Humanist chaplain to also join the club and put a positive light on Humanism's values and ideals for the benefit of others, just like it's a similar message (though we know it's for different reasons, but let's overlook that in this circumstance) within the reasons behind the organized theistic religions. In other words, take the theme and human/communal values of the program, and jump in with all you've got! Work together to bring about some beauty into the lives of people who feel humiliated and on the fringe of society. Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. This ethic of service to others is what it's all about anyway, and bridges between various communities could really be cemented with such a service if done sensitively and properly.

Do you know what would really throw a curve ball?...a joint effort with something like Humanists and Muslims raising money for Red Crescent to be sent to Djibouti or Bangladesh. Detractors would say, "But it's Red Crescent. Aren't they Muslims? Doesn't their 2% zakkat go to this?" And a thoughtful Humanist could reply, "Yes, and your point is? It's all going to a good cause, and that's to eliminate suffering somewhere. We're really grateful to our Muslim friends to bringing to our attention how we can bring some relief in Dhaka because our community doesn't have any official contacts there and we feel that the Red Crescent's work and service there is vital. Hey, does UNICEF, Goodwill, or Christian

Aid have any people there who could help us ALL make sure that the money gets distributed where it would do the most amount of good? We appreciate the combined work of everyone who has felt compelled to do something about this problem." Bipartisan lines crossed; 2 religious traditions enjoying each other's company whilst working for a common cause of goodness; Humanism remaining "neutral" and being the catalyst for collaborative work and mutual understanding: it's a huge win-win-win situation.

GE:

Val: I think you already answered that.

GE: I think so. Its something I do and that happens all the time.

EK: Perfectly, he or she can explain what [it] means to be thankful and tell about the origins of this day.

Val: 6. What needs do a non-religious population have that religious chaplains cannot meet?

JT: This is really a complex question, but I'll try to be short, and I can elaborate more later. First though "nonreligious" can be a confusing term. The excluded demographic are "nontheists" and the proposed fix (among many others) is "humanist chaplains." The term "religious" has various uses in various situations by various people, so it's best not to use it without clear definitions about what it means. Other terms, nontheist, humanist, god, etc. are clearer.

Humanist chaplains deserve inclusion on their merits for the chaplaincy. We shouldn't have to justify our existence. Why do we need women leaders in corporations or African Americans in the police department? Diversity is valuable and in particular, diversity helps inform all those other people who don't share that diversity trait. The explicit inclusion and recognition will measurably improve the support given by the 5000 non-humanist chaplains who will then 1) know they have to support humanists equally and 2) will have someone "on the inside" to call.

And humanist diversity is still within the scope of the chaplaincy because we have a perspective on core values and beliefs. It's not a hobby or a study session or even gender or race. Some items or more or less important but nonetheless not "chaplain" work, but humanism is within that scope.

http://militaryatheists.org/news/2012/04/playing-favorites-what-beliefs-should-chaplains-support/

RB: I have spent many hours in discussion with various Army chaplains while applying to become a Humanist lay leader and more recently, when trying to change my official records to reflect that I am a Humanist. During all of these discussions, I had to labor to explain what Humanism is. Not one chaplain had been taught formally or taken the time to teach themselves what it means to be a Humanist. In my experience, chaplains find Humanists an unwanted competition to their belief systems and offer little more than passive aggressive resistance to our efforts at recognition. How can these same chaplains provide guidance to Soldiers seeking to understand what it means to be a Humanist when they don't know and, as I suspect, are unwilling to learn and are repulsed at our very existence.

JH: The need to be left to think and believe what they wish without external interference. As a non-theistic person, the last thing I would "need" or even want from a religious person is to tell me some tosh about "god's plan for my life" or "I know what you need, salvation in the name of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ," and so on and so forth. Please, save the salvation talk for someone else who will give you the time of day. But if I'm lonely and need a friendly face and warm ear, let's talk. If I'm worried about my wife or my step-son's future, we've got a deal at the discussion table. This is, of course, assuming that the theistic chaplain comes from a background where proselytizing others is a theological tenet (as not all religions have a "Great Commission" as found in the Gospel of Matthew).

Likewise, for nominally non-theist religions like certain strands of Buddhism, or even groups like Temple of Set, Satanism, Zoroastrianism, and so forth, it's always edifying to learn from them and to have their experiences and outlooks enhance our own. But, at the end of the day, if I want to discuss some of the deepest existential things with others from my own perspective, I want to go to the non-theist chaplain. Say I'm a Humanist chaplain and someone comes to me because their baby is seriously ill and they want to know my opinion about whether or not the infant will go to purgatory, or if there is such thing as an "age of accountability" or maybe the family is heavily-Calvinist and thinks they're already part of "the elect." I can have tons of love and compassion for the family. Maybe my own life's experiences are such that I can personally identify with them about their baby because I had a similar experience. Maybe I have sat with that person for hours on end, helping them keep in contact with home, or maybe I've been in the hospital with the baby and the mother as we've waited to hear from the physician. There is a ministry of presence that I can provide for them, but to answer that question and to

do so truly from the perspective of their faith tradition?!??...I'd do more harm than good. Now, reverse that situation, and you've got an answer to your question! My closest friends, ironically enough, are some Sikh granthis, a few rabbis, a Methodist lay minister, and an Anglican bishop. I'd follow these people anywhere, because of the closeness of our hearts and minds. But, despite our love for each other, we all know there is a limit that they cannot cross, and likewise, vice versa if their faith communities were to approach me on similar terms for similar reasons. So, what would we do? Refer! And that's what any effective and competent institutional minister would do.

GE: I would say again, its sort of like what needs does a religious population have that a non-religious chaplain can't meet? I think that there is a need – sometimes we experience need to have a community experience facilitated by a person who not only understands our community but also identifies with it. And it's turning and leading and facilitating it. I'll give you an example: I had a student once whose brother died of cancer and everybody that knew him knew he was close to his brother, and I came up to him and gave him a hug and I said to him, "I'm so sad to hear about what happened to your brother. It's such a tragedy and it's unfair and there's nothing I can possibly say to make it better, but I care about you and everything I heard about him just suggests that he was just a wonderful, wonderful person." And he said, "I can't believe you're just about the first person I've spoken to all day who hasn't said something like 'he's with God now' or 'you'll see him again in the next life.'" And he's just been boiling over after all these remarks with all these people, who are well intentioned, who were telling him exactly what he didn't want to hear, and were almost making him feel that if he didn't accept their worldview that he couldn't mourn properly. He was just so relieved to be comforted from a specifically non-theistic, humanist perspective. And sometimes it's really important to have people who are trained in that perspective who can go to a soldier or a person and comfort them. A psychologist might be able to give them a humanistic or non-theistic perspective, but my sense is they're not roving around the base looking to see who is feeling bad and who is feeling good and how they can connect one soldier with a group of others to help them support one another. And that's what a chaplain does. A chaplain actually goes out and actively looks for people who are in need of some guidance and either facilitate it him or herself based on their training or tries very hard to put people who are in need of some guidance and support in contact with others who can

help them reflect on what they need at this moment. And again, a psychologist just can't do that the same way.

EK: Explain life from a natural point of view, search for meaning by human conditions, tell stories about values from Greek and Roman philosophers, marry homosexuals, talk about abortion without prejudice, talk about euthanasia without prejudice.

Val: 7. What else can the Army do to better accommodate the non-religious population?

JT: Other than humanist chaplains and lay leaders? Humanists should be consulted in training development in the areas of Spiritual Fitness, relationship counseling, suicide counseling, hospital accessions, official records/dog tags, equal opportunity, and general chaplain training, just off the top of my head.

http://militaryatheists.org/advocacy/spirituality/

RB: Approve Humanist as a religious preference in our military records.

JH: Could I suggest that the Army be honest with itself to truly recognize the existence – and growing numbers – of those who self-identify as "atheist" and "Humanist." This means that the Army has to stop giving gloss to the rights and needs of the non-theist community and give them something real, and not a bag of beads to keep them happy and quiet. As a Humanist myself, the Army must also come to terms that there are others like me who are quite comfortable, at the least, and inviting and welcoming to the LGBTQ population and that we will recognize and celebrate their relationships as equal to heterosexual ones. As a Humanist, I do not tolerate any form of discrimination, especially when the law says that "X is discrimination," and therefore, rules and regulations regarding fair play and equal treatment must be followed . . . and the military needs to take these rules and regulations seriously and earnestly instead of whenever it's either convenient or supportive of the majority (who has already enjoyed the benefits of "fairness"), or when a minority group takes notice and raises it as a cause for concern.

GE: Besides Humanist chaplains? Because I do think to a certain extent even beginning the process of admitting one Humanist chaplain or making it possible for somebody who might be a well-trained Humanist chaplain to serve in the armed forces – even that could be a significant moment for some soldiers who would feel that finally they have some option – finally there's something there for them that they could potentially be served by – even that they could be acknowledged in that way –

would be significant to a lot of soldiers that even though they themselves might not be on a base with a Humanist chaplain, I think that it would be at least a little bit significant to some of these people to know that the Army considers their worldview, their life stance to be legitimate. Which often it can feel to people that the institutions that they're a part of do not consider their beliefs and their values to be legitimate. So there's that and then stopping any and all instances of discrimination or by their active or passive discrimination against people who have Humanistic beliefs. In other words, stop coercing them; stop belittling them. Recognize verbally that their beliefs and values belong in the same conversation as the other beliefs and values that the Army recognizes and upholds.

EK: Start with humanist chaplains, give information, come to the Netherlands and see how we are organized.

Val: 8. How would the Army Chaplaincy have to change if Humanists were appointed to serve as Chaplains?

JT: The need for reform already exists because humanists and other nontheists are already in the military. Allowing for a humanist chaplain would hopefully open the door to other reforms, but the need already exists whether or not there is a humanist chaplain. I guess they'd have to approve an emblem for humanists (the happy human) but that's basically nothing.

RB: I don't think they would have to install new bathrooms or drinking fountains. But holy water containers might need to be properly labeled to prevent inadvertent burnings. Seriously, since the Chaplaincy already contains non-theistic members such as Buddhists, change would be little more than a new patch for Humanist Chaplains.

JH: First and foremost, it would have to be transparent in its policies, as it would be clear that people would call them on things if they backed-away from what is the right thing to do. As mentioned before, it would have to stop with the appeasement language and actually put its money where its mouth is by a concrete support to non-theists through the appointment of a Chaplain. Funny thing is, to my understanding, the rules and regulations are there for a "level playing field" of equality, but there are some who are not even allowed on the team who is on the playing field. Hmm. . . . It isn't the players' fault, it isn't the game's fault, so it must be. . . .

GE: I don't think it would have to change very much. I can tell you that I don't think that the Harvard chaplains had to change very much because they've had a Humanist chaplain amongst them for the past 40 years.

Other groups of chaplains where Humanists have joined, I really don't think they changed things very much. One of the things we have on our campus is a non-proselytizing agreement that chaplains sign that says that while we are serving on this campus and serving this population, we will not attempt to convert anyone from one religion or lifestance to another. And so I do think that humanists would be opposed to active proselytization within Army context, and I guess I would say that I don't think that's what chaplains should be in the Army for. My impression is that Army chaplains are not there to be converting or actively proselytizing soldiers to one particular faith group or lifestance. That's something I think they would need to consider, but I don't think you even need a Humanist chaplain to be present in order to make that point. I think there's plenty of people who value Army Chaplaincy and also value the separation of church and state and are disappointed when they hear Army chaplains engaging in proselytization. I think that there are evangelical and other Christians who are against proselytization who are disappointed if they ever hear of Army chaplains proselytizing. And in a sense all the chaplains would have to do to welcome a Humanist chaplain is to affirm their own – I would hope – value of pluralism.

EK: Open minded, do not see them as a danger or not worthwhile, positive ground to work together, respect the humanist lifestance and see them as equal.

Val: 9. What one or two top issues would arise (if any) in having both religious and non-religious chaplains serving together?

JT: Nothing different than Jews and Muslims or Mormons and Pentecostals. Nothing different than the current reality of theistic and nontheistic Soldiers who already serve together. That's not to say there would be no issues, but any potential issue is already being handled (that's not to say well-handled).

I will elaborate here that there would be a good opportunity to have a two-sided discussion with respect to religious issues. For example, some Christians (I'd say others but it's ALWAYS Christians even if it's only a minority) proselytize or at least very much want to proselytize. Whatever your feeling on the matter, we can agree there is a lot of media visibility and angst about this issue. And the point is that only Christians want to proselytize so essentially only Christians are being criticized for improper religious speech/expression.

With humanist chaplains and more visibility and activity among humanists and nontheists in general, the other side of proselytism – denigration

– will be more visible. Christians will occasionally feel their beliefs are denigrated. A chaplain in Alaska posted an article in his official capacity relying on and promoting the derogatory concept that there are no atheists in foxholes–we lack conviction. He was officially allowed to post that article within his personal rights. That was a bad decision, but that was the decision from military leaders. In the future, a humanist might speak out against the efficacy of prayer or the existence of heaven. I should hope we can avoid that, but it's likely to happen. At that time, we can look at not just proselytism but also denigration of religion and put fair restrictions on both kinds of speech/expression about religion. I think that will be a step forward.

Also see policy changes I helped implement at USAFA:

http://militaryatheists.org/news/2011/07/air-force-academy-makes-strides-in-religious-respect/

RB: I strongly suspect that mature professionals can avoid loud and disruptive arguments over the existence of God that results in violent riots throughout the military. Some chaplains may leave the service though; especially those who already feel their religious principles were compromised by allowing openly gay service members. If so, the Army will only be stronger without such intolerance.

JH: Again, none really. I'm saying this because I personally do not see any issues arising. HOWEVER, I would be willing to bet my last Great British red penny that people would *create* "issues" such as, "It's going to make the morale of the troops plummet" or "God will strike us down in furious wrath. . . ." or "Nostradamus or Pope Whoever predict that this is a sign of the antichrist," so it will just whip-up fervour and frenzy. I imagine that there would be an upshot of complaints and concerns being raised at the onset. But then again, wasn't that what happened when American schools finally followed the law regarding racial integration? (Love and respect to you, Bobby Kennedy!! You and your Presidential brother had some serious courage to back up Revd. Dr. King like that!!!!)

I also think that it would open people's eyes to what truly are their responsibilities and rights within the military and that those who have been silenced these many years will feel empowered to speak-up:
Person 1: "I don't want to hear the prayer go over the tannoy on the ship."
Person 2: "Well, you're going to because it's the way it's always been."
Group: "Hi. Actually, we find this offensive and we are going to take a

stand on this issue. Please be courteous about this so we don't have to start filing paperwork. That's not what this should be about."

Another issue, though it's a non-issue to me (I've lived away from America for a long, long time now and I have a lot of questions about why "issues" are "issues," but that's just me): it might actually foster some understanding between theist and non-theist communities – you know, tear down some walls and open up the channels of communication. I do have morals, just not the god-talk behind them. I do believe in ethical living, just without some diatribe of stewardship/khalifa etc. I want to see harmony in my community – local, national and global – but not because I think some cosmic brownie-point tally is being created with my name on it. I do *not* impale children on spikes nor do I hold evil séances on the weekends. I am not against religious believers, and I believe that working alongside religious chaplains would help educate them to see that I, and other non-theist people, are not the amoral or immoral "heathens" that we are often made out to be. Just because we do not believe in some Supreme Deity, does not make us less human, just more Humanist.

GE: There would be an opportunity and need for more dialogue about what it means to be religious and non-religious. I can't imagine there would be anything else that would arise.

Val: Now are you saying religious and non-religious in the way I'm defining it?

GE: What I'm saying is that if you have Humanist chaplains serving along side the current kind of chaplains that exist in the Army, then I'm sure this would stimulate additional conversations about what it means to be a humanist – what it means to be a religious believer, but I don't think anybody would have to change who they are in order to have those conversations.

It reminds me of – like in the national football league. They just had this young man who came out as a gay football player and people have these discussions – what issues would arise in the locker room? If a gay football player were ever to be playing alongside straight football players – but what people forget in that example is that the player already played an entire season with his entire team knowing that he was gay. And not only did he win defensive player of the year in the top division in college football, but his team had its best season in many, many, many years. And they all knew that he was gay. And I would just draw that analogy to a humanist chaplain in the Army. I think that it would be very easy for most people to live alongside one another knowing that some were

religious and some were not religious and some were humanist and some were not humanist. It happens all the time in American civilian life and it would happen very easily in the Army.

Val: 10. Any other input not listed above for consideration on this topic?

JT: (No response)

RB: American principles and values have always been a conglomerate of different ideas molded together through debate leading, albeit slowly at times, to consensus. However, the country continues to evolve toward more tolerant ideals and acceptance of diversity. And the Army often leads the way as history demonstrates with segregation, women's equality and gay rights. The Humanist movement to gain acceptance in the Army Chaplaincy is but another step forward in keeping the Army on point.

JH: (No Response)

GE: (No Response)

EK: In the Netherlands we successfully for 50 years [have had] Humanist Chaplaincy in the Armed Forces (see enclosure PowerPoint Presentation).

http://www.slideshare.net/ErwinAKamp/humanist-chaplaincy

Appendix C
Army Chaplain Interview Questions

The following information, along with the humanist interview responses, was sent to the participants so they could preview the interview questions prior to the interview:

Please note that the term "religious" in "non-religious" instances has a transcendent connotation rather than simply a set of beliefs or practices. But feel free to discuss the term as you understand it.

1. How do chaplains support non-religious personnel?

2. Should the Army have non-religious chaplains? Why or why not?

3. Should the Army have non-religious DFGLs? Why or why not?

4. The Chaplain Corps had to adapt with the addition of Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu chaplains; how would the corps have to change with the addition of an Atheist or Humanist chaplain?

5. How could the Army better accommodate the non-religious population?

6. Would you conduct a non-religious ceremony for someone, such as a baby naming ceremony, a funeral, or a divorce ceremony without making any religious references?

7. What one or two top issues would arise (if any) in having both religious and non-religious chaplains serving together?

8. Any other input not listed above for consideration on this topic?

Appendix D
US Army Chaplain Interview Responses

Interview questions and associated responses as asked by the Author (Val) to the following US Army Chaplains during the time they served in the positions listed:

Chaplain (COL) Ronald Thomas (RT) Command Chaplain for the Combined Arms Center, Ft. Leavenworth, KS (Transcribed face-to-face interview, Ft. Leavenworth, KS)

Chaplain (COL) John Read (JR) Command Chaplain for the Southern Regional Medical Command; served as Director for the Center for World Religions (Responded in writing through email)

Chaplain (LTC) Doyle Coffman (DC) Deputy Command Chaplain for the Installation Management Command, Ft. Sam Houston, TX (Responded in writing through email)

Chaplain (MAJ) Seth George (SG) World Religions Instructor at the Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS (Responded in writing through email)

Chaplain (CPT) Jonathan Fisher (JF) Chaplain for the Joint Regional Correctional Facility, Ft. Leavenworth, KS and facilitates a non-religious discussion for inmates entitled, "Men of Reason" (Responded in writing through email)

Chaplain (CPT) Thomas Dyer (TD) Army's first Buddhist Chaplain (Transcribed telephonic interview, edited by interviewee)

Val: Please note that the term "religious" in "non-religious" instances has a transcendent connotation rather than simply a set of beliefs or practices. But feel free to discuss the term as you understand it.

JR chose to respond to the interview request with separate remarks from the interview questions. His response was as follows:

JR: As I've looked at the questions and the Humanist/humanist responses, I would like to respond a little differently, if that is okay. In light of my experiences in MEDCOM, DACH-SFM, Director for the Center for World Religions, what has become clear to me is that this has to be addressed from the framework of religious advisement, and by focusing on the religious factors that impact the operational environment: Leaders, facilities, ideologies. I don't in any way discount who they are and what they believe; however, these three points are related to not just the ability

to perform and provide, but our capacity for internal and external advisement around religious factors.

First, we ought to consider questions concerning Humanist authoritative leaders and the texts relied upon to provide and promote humanist values that serve to sustain the living, care for the wounded, and honor the dead. We understand that the Chaplain Corps does not exist for itself; it exists for the Commander to achieve the mission through the commander's RSP [Religious Support Plan]. We don't exist to validate ourselves, but to care for others. The salient point being on what authority or by what authority does one exercise a Humanist vocation? Where does the Chaplain Corps go to understand the authority by which the Humanist serves? Who is informing the humanist chaplain? Self-informed? What kind of authority does a Humanist exercise to facilitate core capabilities (provide and advise)? Only personal? Or is he/she one part of a corporate entity? And what text or texts serve to identify with the Humanist corporate entity and who are the corpus leadership?

Secondly, where does a Humanist assemble to nurture a Humanist vocation? In the library? Are there facilities or physical structures that humanists visit to inspire humanism?

Thirdly, this point may be intertwined with the first, but what are the distinct statements of humanism that inspire vocation in the Army? What are the ideological concepts that inspire people to act rightly? Can a humanist also be a wiccan high priest? What are the distinctions and how does one identify him/herself as a Humanist beyond self-declaration? What are the discernible symbols, creedal statements, texts, gestures that express the humanist ideals? How can the Army supply system provide Humanist stuff? What might be given to Soldiers that assist in achieving the commander's intent? How does a Humanist integrate into Army cultural milieu?

I think we have to consider the religious factor framework in any/all dialogue.

Val: 1. How do chaplains support non-religious personnel?

RT: Our mandate is to provide or perform. The definition you use is where we get into all personnel have the right to the free exercise of religion – whatever that is to that person, their interpretation of that, and we have a mandate by the Chief of Chaplains, by the Army, by Congress to provide or perform for the free exercise. So if we can't perform it for them personally, then we need to assist them in finding the resource to accomplish their desire.

DC: Chaplains provide confidential counseling to all Soldiers and their Families, religious or non-religious. I know from the discussions that many of the non-religious (Humanists or Atheists) would make the claim that chaplains cannot provide counseling without invoking religion. Both in my Army Chaplain Military training, Army Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training, and Seminary training, I was personally taught to address people with respect of where they are personally with respect to God, religion or non-religion. One issue that is brought to the frontline of discussion is can a chaplain provide a non-religious marriage? Some chaplains have and will provide non-religious types of civil marriages. I personally have provided names of individuals (Justice of the Peace) who can provide these types of non-religious ceremonies or civil unions/marriages.

SG: We support non-religious personnel in a variety of ways through counseling, serving as an advocate for a Soldier to his supervisor, advising various leaders in the command about religious issues or issues of morale and morals on occasions. Sometimes the non-religious personnel is the command team and the advisement to that command team should be to advise them on a variety of sensitive matters to include killing and the sanctity of life in the face of the enemy. Non-religious personnel come to various programs and retreats sponsored by either chaplains or commands such as Single Soldier retreats, Marriage retreats, family day activities, Battalion and Brigade Balls/Formals. We participate in various training or command ceremonies as requested by the command such as Memorial Ceremonies, Causality Notifications, Resilience Training events and suicide training. There are also opportunities for us to participate in FRG [Family Readiness Group] meetings and activities, educational programs for young Soldiers and specific duties like that of a Jump Master. All of these activities are performed with an understanding that at any given event or training we may, as a Chaplain, find ourselves in counseling sessions that require confidential communication or a conversation with a Soldier or family member who has spiritual questions or issues even if they have no fixed spiritual commitments.

Finally, of tremendous importance is our willingness and ability to develop friendships within the units in which we serve. Most Chaplains end up wearing a number of informal hats in which Soldiers can look upon us as their "battle buddy," "running partners," an outlet for conversational relief or even as the "brother/older brother" they never had . . . some Chaplains are old enough to be father figures. It must also be recognized that there are many non-religious Soldiers that want Chaplains to be their

pastors based on the friendships and conversations that develop during road marches, getting sick together in a C-130, etc., even though this "pastoral" relationship will never develop into a discipleship or times of public worship. Nevertheless, they are still important components of serving with non-religious Soldiers.

JF: Perform and Provide. One program I have established in the prison seeks to do this by:

- Taking their views seriously
- Treating their views/beliefs/needs seriously
- Engaging them
- Providing community
- Program involves time in the schedule for "Men of Reason." Attendees are able to discuss life, meaning, purpose in the context of philosophy, science, religious ideas and other viewpoints. There is no religious dogma attached to the study and the group agrees to use the speaker/listener technique to hear and understand each other.

Value them and treat their views with the same respect given to other religious ideas.

TD: How do chaplains support non-religious communities in the army? From my point of view and from my experience, the chaplain does support the non-religious personnel, but not in a religious specific way. It is not what we are designed for – that is to serve the non-religious community. The Chaplain Corps' purpose is to protect First Amendment Religious Rights of Service Members, perform religious services, funerals, and pray for the dead, dying, wounded or sick. Furthermore the Chaplain's role is to design religious programs that meet the spiritual needs of Service Members and their families while in service and specifically while on a deployment. However, the Chaplain does provide counseling, leadership, and guidance for life for anyone in the Army ranks, yet so do other entities in the Army such as, MFLCs, NCO's, peers, Behavioral Health and all the helping agencies. Therefore from my point of view, the Chaplain Corps' primary mission is to provide religious services, religious education, religious specific weddings, funerals and ceremonies. The secondary role of the Chaplain is to be a team player and participate in the Army's health and wellness programs/training and provide life skill counseling to anyone who seeks out a Chaplain for help.

Val: 2. Should the Army have non-religious chaplains? Why or why not?

RT: Well obviously that is an answer that only Congress can answer. Personally, I would say we have to decide which definition we're going to use for religion. We wrestle with what is the difference between religious and spiritual – which is where the Army has Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. Spiritual is part of your fitness domain and then religion. So those two terms right now in the Army are different but kindred spirits. I guess you can put it that way. So to answer the question, I would say no.

DC: Personally, I do not think the Army should have non-religious chaplains. It is helpful to understand that the primary responsibility is to secure the Constitution-based free exercise religious rights of Soldiers, Family Members and DoD Civilians. The Lawful Authority of the Army Chaplain Corps was challenged by a 5 year court battle. On November 23, 1979 a civil suit was filed in the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York by two Harvard Law students, Joel Katkoff and Allen Wieder. They complained that the Army chaplaincy violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment to the US Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The plaintiffs argued that the Army Chaplaincy violated the Establishment Clause. From 1963-1970 the US Supreme Court had developed a 3-pronged test to determine Establishment. Only one of these three needed to be violated in order to create Establishment. Even though the final court decision could not rule on the Constitutionality of the Chaplaincy, only the Supreme Court could do that, it did look at the three prongs. They determined that the establishment clause is violated whenever the government makes a law: "1) whose purpose is to advance religion, or 2) whose primary effect is to advance religion, or 3) when there is excessive entanglement between government and religion." The final court decision was issued by the 2nd Circuit Appellate Court, New York, on 22 January 1985. The judges described the primary function of military chaplains as the engagement "in activities designed to meet the religious needs of a pluralistic military community." The key word in all of this is religion.

With that in mind, the greater question involved is a non-religious entity considered religious? On one hand, the Humanist Organizations meet the IRS standard but on the other hand they are not considered religious by the Supreme Court. In other court cases, the Supreme Court ruled that non-religious thought (Humanist Manifesto) can be taught in public schools because it was not religious but secular human thought. On the other side of the equation, biblical thought cannot be taught in public schools because of the establishment clause. The courts ruled in doing so,

would violate the establishment clause. So the decision was that non-religious thought is not religious. Until the Supreme Court rules that Secular Humanism is religious in nature and cannot be taught in public schools because of the establishment clause, I cannot see how you can have a Humanist Chaplain.

I do believe that Humanism can and should be addressed in another forum of the Army other than the Army Chaplaincy.

SG: The Chaplain Corps was designed to serve the religious needs Soldiers have for worship. This has been codified, and is a Title-10, Constitutional right. If Soldiers no longer have any need for worship services then we can be replaced with professional counselors, social workers, community organizers or event planners. The Soldier's right and freedom to engage in public worship is the main issue. What I can or cannot do for non-religious Soldiers or those of other faiths is truly an enjoyable part of the Chaplain ministry and at a personal level has supplied me with some of my best memories of service, but it is not why the chaplaincy exists. With this in mind, the question I have regarding Humanist/non-religious chaplains is not about the definition of religion per-se or the relationship between religion and community. Conversations about the nature of religion could go in circles about whether a religion is a function of a given group/community, or if religion is the substance/object of faith. It could be argued that it is both substantive and functional. But it is not about these things or even if the essence of "religion" is really an existential projection of the human spirit or condition such as the need for community, or the need to worship. The chaplain's role is not to form community based on discussions of philosophy, existentialism, societal needs, patriotism or civil religion, all of which may include what is commonly recognized as "religious" symbols or practices. Rather, the role of the chaplain is to be a sacramental servant or practitioner of the faith belonging to the Soldiers who share a similar faith. Within Christianity, the sacrament ministers to the object of the Soldiers faith, which is Jesus Christ. A Buddhist may lead fellow practitioners through skillful practices of meditation and mantras so that they will encounter the transcendent reality or to invoke the presence of a god such as Guandi or guide such as Guan-yin, a Bodhisattva. Each religion has its distinctive characteristics of worshipping what they define as "God" or "The Real." As I understand Humanists, a life-stance is posited in which "Man is the measure of all things." If however, "man" becomes the object of Humanist worship, and certain practices or rites become necessary for Humanist Soldiers who are facing the prospect of death and combat, then this

question will resolve itself. Commanders will ask congress for Humanist "Celebrants" to come onto Active Duty and be combat multipliers based on the provisions of our Constitution. If that happens the definition and understanding of what a Chaplain is will change slightly, but it will still incorporate the understanding that Humanist Chaplains will lead groups of like-minded Soldiers in worship and prepare them for the possibility of killing, death, and its aftermath among surviving Soldiers. The Army's list of recognized religions has changed in the past and it will probably change in the future because free exercise of religion is part of what makes our country and constitution unique.

The rise of social media and the availability of the Internet should not be overlooked in this matter either. For many faith groups, it is the physical presence of a minister that is important. Only ordained priests can administer sacraments to Catholics, as is the case for some pastors serving protestant denominations. Perhaps I need to be corrected, but it is my understanding that Buddhist monks are the ones who build a mandala to invoke the presence of gods or Bodhisattva's and then dismiss them at the conclusion of the ceremony. Therefore, on-line sermons or Facetime chats, though helpful and encouraging, do not meet the scope of theological needs of corporate worship for Christians and perhaps not for Buddhists either. Granted, not every battalion has a Catholic priest. Not every Protestant Soldier has a Protestant Chaplain, nor every Jewish Soldier a Jewish Chaplain. In addition, some Christian denominations do not place equal emphasis on Baptism or Communion and therefore, the need for the physical presence of an ordained priest or pastor is not as acute. Many faith groups can have needs met by lay leaders within a battalion or brigade, and some could be led in prayer through VTC. But the fact remains in the moments prior to combat, large numbers of Soldiers voluntarily desire to be led in some form of worship. Some desire this out of the sincerity of their personal faith, some in hopes of receiving good luck or comfort, and some are merely curious to hear what those of faith such as chaplains have to say. Many choose not be a part of such worship services and prepare in their own way. But the fact is there are Soldiers that need an ordained pastor to physically lead them in worship regardless of whether it is on a patrol base or during high intensity conflict in which an entire battalion or brigade is in combat. In those situations technologies fall short of both the theological expectations and necessity certain Soldiers require. Technologies aside, and more to the point, the Army has to consider very carefully any decision to intentionally place non-religious chaplains within units, who by their own creeds such as the Humanist

Manifesto, do not worship a God, Transcendent Reality, or appreciate the possibility of an afterlife and thereby jeopardize the ability for Soldiers to worship according to their beliefs.

I was very aware that not everyone in my first combat experience was interested in worship, but the numbers grew as our combat experiences grew more severe. Likewise, the needs of non-religious Soldiers became more acute, not always for spiritual counsel, but for various concerns related to the dangers. I truly wish I could have been more effective in meeting the needs of both religious and non-religious Soldiers alike, and towards that end I did reach out for the helping services available in theatre so that a wider population of Soldiers could have their needs met. Still, the reality was that I deployed as a Chaplain into combat because Soldiers in that battalion had a Constitutional right to be led in worship by an ordained minister of their faith group.

If the question of non-religious chaplains was a matter of sharing rank, position, or various resources, having a non-religious Chaplain is not such a complicated issue given the trends of our society or those of other nations such as Holland. Likewise, if the question is about providing emotional support and encouragement for a particular community such as Humanist groups in the garrison or deployed environment, again, I don't think this is that complicated of an issue. But the basis for the Constitutional provision given to Soldiers is to ensure that as many Soldiers as possible, have the right to a pastor willing to accept the responsibilities of administering the sacred rites of worship during times of war, i.e. bringing God to the Soldiers and the Soldiers to God. This is the essential identity of the Chaplain Corps and the reason clergy were requested by Commanders during the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and all the major wars since. The Soldier's right to the religious freedom does not revolve around rights to counsel and comfort (though we try to provide this as part of our calling), nor is it a right of free speech or assembly as civilians have and enjoy. It is a right to the free expression of religion which is both public and private worship with a Rabbi/Imam/Pastor/Priest etc. Therefore, if Humanists develop their own forms of public worship and Soldiers develop a need for such leadership, I don't see why the constitution would prevent them from having access to Humanist chaplains. However, if these forms of worship do not develop, I fail to see how the particular Constitutional provisions mentioned above are applied for those who do not engage in worship, and why the particular needs of a Humanist community couldn't be met by designated leaders/celebrants who already serve within the Army, or who may be contracted

by the Army. Furthermore, just as the Chaplain Corps was created by Commanders (George Washington was willing to serve as Commander as long as the Continental Congress authorized a Chaplain), it is plausible that a "Humanist Corps" with a unique identity of its own could be developed if Commanders/Congressional leaders wanted it. Granted that is unlikely in the near future, but it is as possible. Another possibility for Humanist Chaplains to come on board would be the potential that the Chaplain Corps decides to codify that our primary mission is strictly to "Care for the Wounded, Nurture the Living and Honor the Dead." Period. If this mission statement included only the vision of providing counsel, vacation Bible schools, church communities, Single Soldier retreats, and Marriage Retreats, our branch will first lose its legitimacy in the eyes of Soldiers and then it would lose its constitutional/legal basis leaving the Soldiers to have spiritual needs met through a different mechanism such as lay leaders, social media etc. This however is not the case; our identity (speaking as a Christian Chaplain) is built upon the needs of the Soldiers to have worship services in which the sacraments are offered on a regular basis

JF:

- Yes.
- It would demonstrate that the Army Chaplaincy takes seriously the changing demographics of American society as a whole. It would give truth to the idea that we, as a Corps, are an ever-evolving Corps responding to the demographics of American society.
- It would provide for the spiritual needs of the non-religious in uniform.
- It would help the Chaplain Corps be a more diverse and modern group reflecting what other armies are doing.
- It would help current Army chaplains understand how to better meet the needs of their non-religious/humanist, atheist, agnostic and other Soldiers/families by providing an internal subject matter expert resource.
- We, as a Chaplain Corps, need to be looking for new ways to reach out to our Soldiers where they are at rather than finding reasons not to.

TD: I do not think the Army needs to endorse a Humanist Chaplain. I think in order for the Army to provide a Chaplain for a specific religion-that religion should meet certain criteria. For example:

- The Religion should have a significant historical back ground. The Religion should be well established for hundreds of years (Specific time maybe 200 or more year period) and is not in its infancy, exploratory, or establishing phase.
- The Religion should be a world-wide phenomena. Millions of people from different geographies and cultures practice the Religion
- The Religion should have a well-defined spiritual path that transcends one's current life span. The practice and teaching of the Religion should address issues of the after-life for example:
    - Christianity Islam and Judaism have salvation
    - Buddhism has enlightenment
    - Hinduism has absorption
    - Earth Center has union with the elements

I do not think that Humanism has proven it will be more than a philosophical movement or a world view yet. I do not think the Army has to accommodate every worldview or philosophical movement under Religious Rights, specifically First Amendment Rights. However I do want to be clear that I support different world views and philosophies and I think the Army should provide opportunities for Service Members (SM) to meet, organize themselves in any way SMs would like to – with the exception of hate groups or socially unacceptable activities. Many different groups could form, for example:

- Socratic Groups
- Different Philosophies
- Quantum Mechanics or Science Groups
- Evolutionists
- Masons
- Toast Masters
- Yoga/Meditation (not religious specific)
- Nature groups
- Running or Biking groups
- Martial Arts
- Etc.

There could numerous different groups that could form, and I think the Army should take these types of groups seriously. Human beings need this type of social forming and community building. To say these groups are not religious and should not be covered or protected under religious freedom in no way down plays the importance of these types of group activities for human cultivation. I think at this point a Humanist group/community should have the freedom and protection to form and develop

in the Army. I just would not say a non-religious group like the Humanist movement should be covered by a religious Corps.

Val: 3. Should the Army have non-religious DFGLs? Why or why not?

RT: That's a harder one to answer. Distinctive Faith Group Leader is typically a religious organization. If we're having a non-religious DFGL, should those individuals have someone? Yes. Who is responsible for overseeing DFGL is another question. Now the Army might say, "Chaplains, you have responsibility for both religious and spiritual and to ensure good order and discipline along with the commander because we support the commander on that." Just like religious accommodation goes to the commander, we only advise. So yes they should have that opportunity and some form of leader oversight. But is it the Chaplaincy that should be the responsible for that? I'm not sure yet. I think that is the future according to how our population is arranging itself now. We advise on both internal and external aspects of religion. So if I use your definition of religion, then yes the Chaplaincy would be responsible because that includes both internal and external advisement to the commander. Therefore, we would have oversight of religious activities within the Army. And that's according to the DoD directive. So yes they should, yes it should be monitored for good order and discipline, and yes there should be someone assigned in the Army to support the commander in making those decisions.

DC: Distinctive Faith Group Leaders (DFGLs) are an exception to policy when a Chaplain is un-available to perform a particular religious or sacramental function of a particular faith group. A definition of a DFGL is a non-chaplain religious worship leader. Two things have to be addressed: 1) The religious aspect as mentioned in question two applies. Can the Supreme Court say that Secular Humanism is religious and will the laws change to remove humanistic thought from being taught in public schools as a part of the establishment clause? If not, they cannot be an exception to replace a Army Chaplain. 2) The primary function of a DFGL is for worship. Humanist DFGLs do not provide worship. They will provide instruction in the Humanist Manifesto. Again, I think there is a place in the Army for such instruction, but not through the Army Chaplaincy that is entrusted to ensure the free exercise of religion. I understand that they hold to certain humanistic ceremonies but that does not make them religious. The Masons have ceremonies that are conducted in their organization but do not consider themselves to be religious.

SG: As I understand the broader spectrum of secular humanists, Humanists, Free Thinkers, agnostics, atheists etc . . . I don't see any problem with accommodations made for a Distinctive Community Group Leader, or a Distinctive Humanist Leader. Perhaps, Humanists desire to use the term Distinctive Faith Group Leader to underscore their faith in humanity or a particular ethic, but generally speaking, the term Faith carries different understandings of a transcendent reality or God.

JF:

- See above [JF refers to Question 2].
- Beyond that, every Soldier needs to have their religious needs met. DFGLs exist to help the chaplain perform and provide.

TD: I do not think the Army needs to have non-religious DFGLs for the reasons covered in question 2.

Val: 4. The Corps had to adapt with the addition of Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu chaplains; how would the Corps have to change with the addition of an Atheist or Humanist chaplain?

RT: Well then we would obviously have to change some of our language and our traditional mottos. For God and Country. Obviously that would have to change, because that doesn't represent everybody now. It does represent everyone who is currently endorsed – I think I'm correct on that. But if we have a humanist or a secularist or non-theistic person, we're going to have to change. It won't change how we function, but it may change in some of the language of how we describe ourselves.

DC: Adapting to change has always been a strong point in the Army Chaplaincy. Overall, the Army Chaplain Corps has always adapted. The change that would have to take place for a Humanist Chaplain or DFGL would have to start with the recognition of Secular Humanism as a religion. There would have to be understanding on both the current chaplains and non-religious chaplains that the free exercise of religion cannot be subdued or it will not pass the scrutiny of the Supreme Court and the legitimacy of the chaplaincy will be at stake.

SG: If a substantial number of Humanist Chaplains joined the Corps there could be a number of changes which would include changing the motto of the Corps (For God and Country) to something else, the training topics at CHBOLC [Chaplain Basic Officer Leadership Course] and the various Division and Brigade level trainings that take place would necessarily reflect how ministry to Humanist Soldiers and family members should be addressed should Humanist communities with

leading Celebrants develop. Nevertheless, I am unsure how this would be different than "providing" for the needs of other faith groups that are currently recognized in the Army. I think the main issue would be teaching Humanists the nuances of what worship is and how to provide for those needs, especially if Humanist Chaplains focus their training in the counseling field and do not have civilian training and experience in pastoral care. For example, as the chaplain carrying the duty phone, I recently had a Soldier call me at 5:35 AM for prayer. He didn't want counsel or encouragement, he specifically wanted prayer right then. This is not an insurmountable problem for any chaplain of a different faith group, but it requires an understanding of worship. On two separate occasions Muslims came to me for prayer. In both cases they knew I was a Christian and came to me specifically for prayer even though it would be a Christian prayer. They asked for prayer, I asked for permission to pray as a Christian and they agreed. Soldiers often come and desire ministry at that moment in time, from their chaplain, and much of the time these are moments in which, according to their beliefs, they need prayer, not conversation or counsel, and in deployment situations referral to pray with other chaplains may not be an option. In my opinion this would potentially be a substantial change in the expectations Commanders and Soldiers have of the Chaplain Corps.

JF:

- I do not believe it would.
- We are already a collegial and pluralistic organization. This would simply expand that to humanists. We already need to be conscious of diversity in the corps – nothing much changes here.
- I see the problem at the individual chaplain level not the institutional level. If Senior leadership provide the model of pluralistic collegiality, younger chaplains will not have a problem.

TD: I think the Corps would just have to make some space. They would have to not have a negative or emotional response to a humanist group or a humanist chaplain. They would just have to be professional. They would have to allow for humanist services within the chapel. And they would just have to practice these words that we use a lot about tolerance and just making space and supporting financially. So really I don't think it would be anything different.

Val: What about the motto For God and Country?

TD: Well the motto really doesn't work for me. When I was interviewed by Lauren Green with Fox News, she said, "The chaplain's motto is to

bring Soldiers to God and God to Soldiers. Does that work for you?" I said it doesn't work for me as a Buddhist. She said, "What is your motto?" I said my motto is to help relieve suffering. And as a Buddhist, I'm doing my faith practice if I am actually helping relieve suffering in any context or environment that I'm in. So the motto didn't change when I came in, and it hasn't really impacted me in any negative way. I personally, being the first Buddhist chaplain, I've had really great experiences and negative experiences based upon the individual I came in contact with. So that was really personality driven. I had some really wonderful experiences with chaplains by far. I've had a lot of professionalism and a lot of help. But since 2008, I've had passive aggression toward me and some negative remarks and uncomfortable discussions and things like that. So I would expect if a humanist chaplain was endorsed that he or she would have something similar to that, and they would find that by and large the chaplain corps would be professional. They would provide and perform, and they would accept the chaplain as a colleague. But I would expect that chaplain would also come across some fundamentalist activity and a few things along the way that would not be pleasant. But that's kind of human nature. So I would expect that chaplain to experience that too. And as a low density chaplain, I talked to some Rabbis, a couple of Muslim chaplains, and the Hindu chaplain I had contact with, and they say similar things that I say, which is by and large, it's been good, but speaking in the vernacular, I've been kicked in the head a few times. So I would expect that if we got an earth centered chaplain or a Wiccan chaplain or a humanist chaplain, their path would be similar.

Val: Would we have to change the motto?

TD: The motto did not change when I came in and it has not negatively affected me, therefore I do not think it would have to change.

Val: 5. How could the Army better accommodate the non-religious population?

RT: Well part of the definition of leadership is always to look for ways to improve the organization. So that's something we should be doing all the time. Have we not done it as well? I don't know. I don't know if we have ever done a survey that says "how have your religious or non-religious needs been met, or your spiritual needs been met?" And we have the GAT [Global Assessment Tool]that determines how they view themselves, but maybe that's not so much how they view the organization. So how would we improve it? Well it goes back to the DFGL. Obviously they can't just organize themselves in groups on their own without some

sense of oversight. So there should be a policy on how to establish that small group or setting or whatever they call themselves. I guess a gathering. We went through the initial part with the Wiccan and so now we have ways to accommodate them and how we're going to handle that, so it's just a matter of identifying what are the groups out there that want to self-identify as a group or assembly. And once we do that, then the Army needs to set a policy on what is within the boundaries of good order and discipline. What is within the scope of free exercise? And with the Army culture of diversity to ensure that they're not being set apart or identified as not part of the Army. To me that's the biggest thing – without discrimination.

DC: I believe the Army can accommodate non-religious groups through the Army's Resiliency Program and MWR. This would allow them the freedom to express Humanistic thought within the Army Community.

SG: If organizations of Humanists begin forming on military posts around the country, I'm sure the Army will provide support just as they have done for Wiccan groups. Nevertheless, the purpose of the Army is not to accommodate every single form of society in which Soldiers could possibly organize. The purpose of the Army is to fight and win wars. If Humanists support this mission based on a demonstrated need for specific rites or forms of worship, I'm sure some form of accommodation will follow; if the purpose of Humanist communities is to meet and discuss various issues of life, I doubt much will change. To put it in stark terms, commanders have long known that many Soldiers draw courage to face a fight if they have opportunities to worship and lay their concerns of fear, anger and love before the God they worship. This is part of why Chaplains are "Combat Multipliers" in the eyes of commanders. If Humanists have similar worship needs in order to prepare for combat, then the government should pay attention to addressing those needs.

JF:

- Immediately create a path to non-religious DFGL
- Seriously take on the task of provide and perform.
- Take the views/beliefs/needs of the non-religious seriously.
- In my experience, any non-religious Soldier is the same as a Soldier with a religious view and wants to interact with a leader with the same paradigm – just knowing Humanist Chaplains exist in the Army would help those Soldiers.

TD: I do not think the Army has to accommodate a non-religious population. I think "non-religious" characterizes an aspect of many

Service Members (SM), but it is not a category that reflects social forming or grouping. There are many people who believe in ghosts, but the Army does not have to identify them as "Ghost Believers," and provide some special accommodation for them. However if a group of SMs wanted to form, organize, and gather themselves under a paranormal group, the Army should accommodate their rights to assemble. For this reason, the Army could promote SM's right to assemble, form, organize, and gather for any beneficial reason they chose. This of course, would not include hate groups, terrorist cells, and other socially unacceptable behaviors. For example, the Army could not support of group of SM's who wanted to form, organize and gather as a "Porn Group." There are limitless ways human beings can assemble (form, organize, and gather) in socially beneficial and productive ways. I think a Humanistic group could do this as well. These groups that form could be Command or CSM governed.

Val: 6. Would you conduct a non-religious ceremony for someone, such as a baby naming ceremony, a funeral, or a divorce ceremony without making any religious references?

RT: That came up here recently in a conversation with someone. I know what I believe in and I'm pretty secure in that now by the challenges you go through in the Army. I think as a human being, if that person were in a situation where they just wanted something to help them get through the grief or the pain, I would honor it as long as it did not violate my theology. I couldn't do anything that said, "God does not exist." I couldn't do anything that would put in question how they now perceive me and my beliefs. But as a human being, yeah I probably would help them, but talk to them. I think that's the key – the dialogue of, ok you know what I represent. "You're asking me" so I think after the dialogue, they may see things differently that may not require me to do that anymore. Or it may open the door for further dialogue later on. Not proselytizing, but discussions.

DC: No, as a chaplain, I am here to provide religious support not non-religious support. There are chaplains that have performed some civil marriages. Others have provided the support through a Justice of the Peace.

SG: I am not prohibited from doing so on a case by case basis, but to intentionally and repeatedly do so would be disingenuous to all parties involved. For this reason, I always explain what I can and cannot do during various ceremonies, and what these events signify to me as a minister of the Gospel.

JF:

- I would help them find a way to do ceremony which respected my religion and theirs. This might mean helping them find a humanist group in the community.
- I do this already for all my Soldiers regardless of religion. Nothing changes for me.

TD: Sure, I would perform a non-religious ceremony for individual SMs. I would do this because of my Buddhist practice that teaches what is good and right in the world are activities that produce happiness and reduce suffering. I think performing a service like this would do just that.

Val: 8. What one or two top issues would arise (if any) in having both religious and non-religious chaplains serving together?

RT: As far as the chaplains are concerned?

Val: In the Corps. I was thinking like in a UMT meeting. Like how we open in prayer, I was thinking, what would have to change?

RT: I guess we could have a time of meditation. For those who want to pray, we'll get together and pray. It's like "should we have public prayer or not" now at a command function? I predict in the future, that will not happen anymore. It's becoming too complicated. Just on a side note. This is how our society is changing. This mural is at the national cemetery in Hawaii and it's hanging on the mural for the Pacific. (CH Thomas shows me a picture.) And it talks about the whole issue in the Pacific was? (he waits for my answer) the problem basically was?

Val (reading): A theological and a spiritual . . .

RT: Redundance. That's how we used to see the world as our nation. We couldn't put that up probably today. But that doesn't mean that as chaplains on active duty as we are today, our responsibility is to still care for those who are looking. There is a great book called *Days of Anguish, Days of Hope* about the Bataan Death March and chaplains who were a part of that. One in particular, Robert Preston Taylor, eventually became the first Chief of Chaplains of the Air Force. And what his presence meant to those who were going through that unbelievable nightmare in their lives. I'm not saying that a non-religious or a non-spiritual chaplain could or could not do that, but what do they have to offer? It's just something that comes inside. For the humanist it's inside yourself. Or it could be connected to your fellow man. So the question again?

Val repeats the question

RT: You and I have probably faced this already. People of different denominations, can we share the pulpit together? Can we do programs together? We'll work that out. I think the only issue would be mainly what you brought up that when we get in a group together, we're going to offend one of them if we say, "OK we're going to pray" when that's not a part of their tradition. But are they offending us by not allowing us to pray? So we got to work that out. And I think the best way to do that is to bring everybody in and say OK, how are we going to conduct ourselves in a way that is not offensive but also allows for understanding? We're not in competition against each other. We're in collaboration with each other to accomplish the mission for which we have been placed on active duty. I think we look too much for "here the sky is falling!" and we haven't even had a dialogue yet with an individual. So that would be my answer. Let's not look for issues – we'll deal with it after – if it happens, and then we'll start a dialogue.

DC: 1) The issue of "Separation of Church and State" because of the Supreme Court's decision to allow "Human Manifesto" to be taught in public schools. This would cause an outcry in society of double standards which would be hard to keep out of the Army. 2) Congress would have to change Title 10 to include non-religious accommodation.

SG: There could be confusion among Soldiers as to what the purpose of having both types of Chaplains would be. There could also be mistrust between religious and non-religious chaplains just as there was mistrust between liberal and evangelical chaplains in the Navy during the 1990s. The mistrust resulted in a lawsuit in which evangelical chaplains successfully argued they were the victims of discrimination and denied promotion based on their denominational affiliation. I am not stating that this type of discrimination would happen, but that we must guard against it, for failing to do so would ultimately hurt the Soldiers who deploy.

JF: No more issue than a Christian and Muslim/Hindu/Jewish/Buddhist. Pluralism celebrates diversity and others viewpoints. We are a pluralistic organization. We would not be the Chaplain Corps without the other religions represented. We need each other to accomplish our work.

TD: I do not think any issues will arise.

Val: 8. Any other input not listed above for consideration on this topic?

RT: I always go by the point of view of whose needs are being met? We're not here on active duty to meet our personal needs. We're here to meet the needs of the Army family. One of the things I think that has to be considered is what percentage of the population is asking or has

a need for this? And when we assign a non-theistic chaplain to a unit, I think they are the ones who are going to have the hardest challenge than the rest of us. One of the first things you learn in all of this is becoming an insider, which basically means being accepted and trusted. If you look at the traditional unit today, what percentage claims some aspect of religion in their life? Who claims at least organized religion? Who claims, "I'm religious but just not organized?" And then who says, "I just don't have any belief system at all?" Can that person do the same thing as a religious chaplain today? Can that chaplain who is non-theistic accomplish the same thing for the unit? I don't know if you've ever been assigned to a unit where they've had a Buddhist or Muslim chaplain. The key to their success will be how well we as a Corps and Army support them as they go through the challenge to be accepted. This is a matter of Congress deciding what that's going to look like. But I do think about the Soldier. Is it easier for me as a religious person to adapt to become something for somebody who is not religious than it is for a non-religious chaplain to become something that is going to meet the need of a religious Soldier who is dying? I don't know. But that's something I think we need to carefully consider – whose need is being met? And what does it take to meet the needs of everybody? Can they provide or perform as well as a chaplain who is theistic in their view of the world?

DC: The Secular Humanists have been offered other avenues to provide support to non-religious Soldiers. Why have they refused to support these efforts?

SG: My final comment is simply to contrast the legal role of a Chaplain to lead Soldiers in worship with the opportunity for a Chaplain to be of value to Commanders and Soldiers alike. These two issues should not be confused. The legality of the Chaplaincy is grounded in the Constitution and Title 10, but the source of these documents' legitimacy is the fact that Chaplains speak to the deepest spiritual needs of Soldiers facing the hardships of combat and its aftermath. In other words, the ultimate legitimacy lies with the needs of the Soldiers. This need is fundamentally met by leading Soldiers of a similar faith in corporate worship of God together. This does not conflict with pluralism and the rights Soldiers of different faiths have to their free exercise of worship in the absence of a Chaplain representing their particular faith group. If you will permit a few anecdotal stories: In one occasion, I knelt down with a Muslim Soldier on a road south of Baghdad after an IED strike, and we each prayed for those who had been killed in our own way. The Soldiers killed were not Muslims, but the Soldier who prayed wanted to pray for those

Soldiers out of his sense of compassion and desire to honor them. On another occasion I provided for a Native American to conduct his final rituals for another Native American who had been killed by a sniper. We each engaged in the worship of God in our own way which was distinct but in line with our traditions and the needs of the Soldier just killed. I could imagine similar situations with Humanist lay leaders or Celebrants. These are just two examples in which the Constitutional rights of those Soldiers who had been killed were honored and recognized, these acts of worship were also public demonstrations of faith as members of the respective platoons watched. They were, in my opinion, appropriate and special demonstrations of pluralism in which both the Islamic Soldier and Native American were free to engage in what was personal and public forms of worship, which was compelled by their faith traditions. My role was to provide for those opportunities. In other occasions, more traditional ceremonies were held that were voluntary in nature which gave Soldiers the opportunity to participate directly in the worship service which included receiving sacraments.

My point is that these are examples in which Chaplains are positioned to perform and provide their role of engaging in unique forms of worship. These types of services should not be confused with the value added that Chaplains bring to the pastoral care of Soldiers or advisement to the Command teams. For example, Chaplains are combat multipliers, an unfortunate label, but there are two reasons for it. The main reason is because Soldiers face death but the sum total of a Soldier is not his ability to fight, win and either kill, die or live for his country. Instead his or her own spiritual welfare in this life helps to inform us of one whole identity and thus a critical component to religious views of these Soldiers. The role of the chaplain is to address this need sacramentally regardless of whether all Soldiers or Commanders in the unit share this belief. The other reason we carry the term Combat multiplier is because we advise Commanders and junior leaders about the appropriate use of force, or when to pull a platoon from one sector to be placed into another in order to mitigate the temptations Soldiers may have for revenge and needless violence. As important as this type of advisement is, it is not the Constitutional reason Chaplains are present. This is merely "value added" by virtue of our presence, but even so, I have the greatest confidence that there are others within a chain of command that can and do provide advisement of any number of issues, to include religious issues with greater skill than some chaplains . . . which is okay, because the legitimacy of the Chaplain Corps is not in advisement, it is the role of being present to

lead others in worship. Therefore, any ability a Chaplain has to advise his Commander or gather Soldiers into a community and develop all sorts of programs and relationships is contingent upon the Chaplains role as worship leader who administers the sacraments/rites of a particular faith group to those Soldiers needing that specific form of religious leadership.

JF: Here is the opinion of a 35 year old senior captain getting ready to become a major – like homosexuality, the rub seems to be in more senior leadership. As long as they provide leadership, model professional collegiality and positive pluralism, there will not be a problem. Chaplains will still come into the Army, Soldiers needs will still be met, and the overwhelming majority of Chaplains will still be Christian – just like the nation we serve.

Ten years from now, Humanist chaplains will be fully integrated into our Corps and we'll enjoy working with one another. We are the Chaplaincy for the best Army in the world. Our Army is what other Armies look to for leadership. We need to get out ahead of this issue and lead from the front in a changing world.

Interestingly, it has been my experience, limited though that may be, that once I start treating my Atheist/Agnostic/Humanist/Non-Religious/No Religious Preference Soldiers with the same positive respect I give to other groups, the harsh relationships disappear. As I pro-actively seek to understand them and their needs, give them the same energy I give all my religious Soldiers, and respect their views, they embrace me, my ministry, and, I suspect, the Chaplain Corps better. Respect to one means respect to all.

This sign hangs on my door. What I find interesting since I hung it is not that I get more gay inmates or Soldiers but that all Soldiers and inmates that come into my office are willing to trust me faster and get to their issue faster. I guess if I'm welcoming to everyone and willing to say so, I must be willing to welcome them too. All means all.

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Really. I mean that.

Liberal, Conservative, Independent, and Apathetic.
Fat, Skinny, In-between and struggling.
Atheist, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Agnostic, Pagan, Heathen, and None.
Seeing a theme here? If I left you out, know that I include you.
Gay, Straight, and everything in between.

Church going and church avoiding.

You are welcome here.

As your chaplain, I make you this promise:

I will not judge you.
I will not condemn you.
I will ask the hard questions necessary for growth.
I will extend the grace of God to you.

You are welcome into this Sacred and Safe space.

TD: I think the only thing that I would promote is Unitarian Universalists because I think what they offer, they offer a spiritual approach that encompasses not just humanists, but the atheists, agnostics, and someone who is strictly non-religious but somehow driven to some type of religious community. And then the Unitarian Universalist has a great moral message. They have ethical training. And I think if we were going to try to touch a hidden people group in the army such as atheists, agnostics, and humanists, the Unitarian Universalists are already there. They have a great history. And I mentioned before for First Amendment coverage of religion, I think it needs to have a history, it needs to have a large group of people that have benefited from it, so it's not in the infancy stage. It's not on the experimental or developmental stage. It's on an establishment stage on the world scene. Unitarian Universalists say that they are the true American religion with many founding fathers that practiced UU. They've got some chaplain corps principals. They accommodate and respect all religions. They have moral teachings and they just recognize humanists already. So if the chaplain corps wanted to branch out, and explore out, and reach out, we could tap into what we already have with some of these Unitarian Universalists. I think that would be a very good approach.

Appendix E
Humanist Manifesto III
Humanism and Its Aspirations

Humanist Manifesto III, a successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933[1]

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifestance of Humanism – guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience – encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience – each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals. We aim for our fullest possible development and animate

our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships. Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the well being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.

For historical purposes, see preceding Humanist Manifestos: I and II.

Notes

1. Copied by permission from the American Humanist Association, "Humanism and Its Aspirations," (2003), http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III (accessed 25 April 2014).

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