

## THE RELIGIOUS TECHNICIAN IN THE CHAPLAINCY

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The Christian Church of America has denied itself the use of many thousands of its ministers during these war years. This has been necessary in order to make it possible for those men to enter the Chaplaincy and serve the millions of American men in the Military communities scattered over a large portion of the globe. At the same time, the Church has tried to carry on its full load of Christian work for Civilian America. Has the Civilian Church lost or gained by this denial of itself? Are there factors in the picture that will help compensate for this denial, both at the present time and in the years ahead?

When the call came for the Church to release its ministers for the Chaplaincy, it did so without thought of gain or loss to itself. The need was urgent for the Christian leaders to bring the ministry of religion to the millions of American young men that were being drafted into the Armed Forces; the Church answered that need as rapidly as possible. As the Chaplain returns to the Civilian Community, he is not the same individual that he was when he entered the Chaplaincy. It is to be expected that influencing experiences have come his way, the same as to other service men. He must assimilate into his views toward life as a religious technician, the meaning that those experiences have for society.

Some of his experiences will have meaning for the Chaplain throughout the rest of his career. It is with an analysis of those experiences that this article wishes to deal. These experiences are the "basic stuff" out of which the answers to the questions asked in the first paragraph will emerge in the coming years. The direction toward which these experiences will guide the future will depend upon the Chaplain and the way in which his Church or-

ganization is prepared to make use of his experiences and new techniques, acquired while in the Chaplaincy, in the years ahead.

### Religious Technicians All!

In the opinion of the present writer, too much has been made of the difference between the work of the civilian minister and the work of the Chaplain. The idea that these terms describe two species of religious workers who work at two different kinds of jobs has come about through, or because of, the following factors:

**Esoteric.** When the Chaplain entered into the Military Community he was very conscious of the sacrifice that he was making of the loss of home life, loss of freedom, interruption of plans, the progressive approach toward danger, etc., because of his sense of duty. As compensation for those sacrifices, he came to regard the Chaplaincy as an esoteric group. Thus, he regarded himself as a member of a special society to help cover up for the loss of personal freedom and the interruptions of home life that occurred when he entered the Chaplaincy. The civilians, whether they were ministers or not, just weren't in the swing of things, according to his new frame of mind.

**Unfamiliarity of Uniforms.** On the other hand, our American society has had very little experience with uniforms. As a result, for most civilians the uniform sets apart the individual who wears it as belonging to an unfamiliar community. In addition, members of the military community speak a special jargon of their own and the civilian is uncomfortable in their presence and wonders what the man in uniform does the rest of the day that is different from civilian ways.

Since the civilian of our country continues in the usual way of living—except for harder work and war-time

shortages—and in the same type of surroundings, he feels that he represents the normal element of our national life. Military personnel, whether they be Chaplains or not, live in a temporary community, since they will, in due time, return to the civilian community. Thus, the civilian community is normal while the ways of the military community are abnormal and unadjusted, a departure from the normal way of doing things.

### **"Compensation" at Root of Cleavage Between Civilian and Military Ministers**

When we recognize how this attitude between the two groups developed, we realize that the need for compensation—an attempt to find an excuse for not belonging to the other group—helped to produce this cleavage between the civilian and military ministers. The cleavage did **not** develop through the process of evaluating the work of the religious leaders. Thus, in order to place these attitudes in better focus, let us speak not of the "Chaplain" and the "Civilian Minister" but rather of the "Religious Technician" in the civilian and military communities.

Most ministers recognize the fact that the work of religious technicians within different civilian communities will vary widely because of conditions within each of those communities. The same principle will cause the work of a religious technician in a military community to differ from the work of a religious technician in a civilian community because of the different needs that are present in the two types of communities. Thus, it is seen that the divarication of the work of the Chaplain from that of the civilian minister is the result of circumstances dictated by the requirements of a different type of community with specialized needs rather than a result of a fundamental diversity of aim.

### **Differences Between Civilian and Military Communities**

**Religious Community of Interest.** The civilian religious technician is in his

pastorate because a group of individuals in that community are so interested in maintaining the church in that community that they have called him to be the pastor of the church. Thus, as he enters the community, he may reasonably expect to find a loyal group of church workers who will help him in planning and maintaining the church program. A community of interest was present even before he arrived.

The religious technician in the military community can never count on such a community of interest being present. The military community is made up of men from all walks of life and from all parts of the country. Practically the only community of interest that can be found among them is centered around the fact that they all belong to the military community and are, as a result, all affected by the fortunes of the war and are separated from their homes. The community spirit is conspicuous for its absence, at least when they first come together. Furthermore, the development of a community spirit is handicapped by the fact that the planning for the community originates from the office of the Commanding Officer or his staff and not from the members themselves.

Neither is the religious technician sent to this group because the group has decided that they have need for a Chaplain and pledge themselves to support his work with their efforts. No! The religious technician is sent because the War and Navy departments have decided that a Chaplain should be assigned to each military group composed of a certain number of men (the actual number will vary, depending upon the type of work performed by the community).

**New Community.** If he is the first Chaplain assigned to the Unit, the religious technician faces the problem of starting his program "from scratch". This is a very wholesome experience for the religious technician. That is, it is wholesome if he does not let it "break him". The experience of find-

ing one's work placed in new surroundings provides an opportunity for the religious technician to start afresh. He faces a new type of community and new needs that he did not encounter in his civilian work. Hence, he need not hesitate to experiment in his approach to his problem of selling religion to this new community.

The opportunity here is the same as though a religious technician found a civilian community in which the church had not been represented and began building a religious program for that community. The first consideration would be to apply religious thinking and attitudes to the needs of the community. Other considerations must wait until later. So also with the program of the Military Religious Technician.

In the military community the Religious Technician will, if he is wise, attempt to side-step those attitudes and techniques that he considers to have continued in the civilian churches **with** and **by** the aid of the momentum of tradition rather than for their significance when applied to contemporary religious living. His preparation for Divine Services must be approached with the desire to help the personnel of his group in their religious thinking for the problems and experiences that lie ahead of them, not purely with the aim to present abstract religious views.

**Absence of Women.** One of the most striking differences that the religious technician notices when he enters the military community is the absence of women. Of course, in some activities, service women and nurses are present, but their numbers do not make a very large percentage of the group when compared with the number of service men.

What significance does this have for the work of the Religious Technician in the military community? Plenty! It means that if his work is to be successful he must re-think his technique and even his approach to the views of religion that he is prepared to present.

In the civilian community, the attendance at Church Services is made up largely of women and girls. The membership of the different committees that do the work of the church usually is predominately composed of women. Let the civilian religious technician consider what would happen to his church if all of the women and girls were suddenly lifted from his congregation. That is the way this Chaplain felt when he first started trying to build a religious program in the military community.

Women have taken the lead in the American church communities and have comprised the majority, in voting power, of most of the different boards and committees. Thus, since the congregation is composed of a heavy percentage of women, the judgment whether the minister is succeeding or not in his community has been based upon the judgment of his work given by women. One of the methods of judging the effectiveness of the minister's preaching has been to consider the numbers that came to hear him. If the number attending services declined, it meant that the women were not coming out as regularly as before; if attendance increased, then the women were responding better than ever, but in either case, that judgment was dictated by women.

Since we have failed to analyze the civilian church attendance into its constituent groupings, we have paid little attention to the thought needs of the different groups within the congregation. Thus, the gradual dropping out, by large numbers of the men of our society, has taken place without the church coming to grips with the reason for this in order to attempt to find a cure for the situation. The military religious technician must face this problem and work with the needs of his new type community, if he is to escape becoming disillusioned, discontented, and disgruntled about the Chaplaincy. The all-male composition of the military congregations has forced the

religious technician to speak a language that will reach and interest men.

### **New Generation Holds Promise of New Advances**

Not only is the military community predominately male in membership but is also a carefully selected membership. That selection is based upon one consideration only, that of physical military fitness. This means that the greater majority of the members of the community will be young men.

The significance and implications for the future of the world of this method of selecting young men for the military community is inherent in human nature itself. It is from new generations, particularly from among the men, that new liberal leaders always arise. Youth has not yet found out what they cannot do, with the result that some times they do the things that preceeding generations said could not be done. This attitude is also carried over into the field of religion. The generation that is now carrying the main burden of the war in the armed services lives in a different type of world from that of their parents. Not that the world is actually different, but that the way we understand it is different. Just as our understanding of the world is different from that of our parents, so must our interpretations of our place in that world be different. The men of the armed forces have tried to find that interpretation. Their answers vary according to their background and associates.

While in the civilian community, the younger generation found their problems mixed in with the needs of the rest of the community. As a result they felt that religion could not meet their need for a guide by which they could plan their lives. Here in the Armed Services, however, the men of the younger generation are in control. Thus, the thinking of the military community is largely the thinking of this generation. Most of the more traditional ele-

ments are back in the civilian community since the women and older men are not represented here. Thus, a certain amount of experimentation in methods will not meet with antagonism on the part of the "experimentees" as would be the case in the civilian church.

### **Religious Temperature of Nation Reflected in Military Community**

Much of the divagation in the methods employed by the religious technician in the military community, when he builds his program, lies inherent in the fact that the Selective Service Boards have drawn a representative cross section of our physically qualified male population into the military community. What kind of a community does this make, in which the religious technician will do his work?

The census figures show that a little less than one-half of our population is Christian. This means that less than one-half even claim to be influenced by the Christian Church. If we were to assume — which I don't think that we can, except for the sake of this illustration — that one-half of those persons who claim to be Christians were men, and that the same proportion held true both among the younger as well as the older men, then we could further assume that not more than half of the military community is Christian.

When we look at the group that claims to be Christian, we find that many of them have taken no interest in the church for years. Some of them claim Christianity by way of their parents or wife.

Thus, a large proportion of the military community has either not been attracted to the church or has left it. For some of those individuals who have dropped out of the church the reason may be that the program of the church in their community was not vital enough to hold their attention, although the ideas expressed were compatible with their general world view. Other individuals, however, have left the

church because the presuppositions of religion, as they know them, are incompatible with their knowledge of the universe.

Such individuals will not become interested in religious thought that poses as an escape from reason and intelligence. God has planted in the innermost fibre of man's soul the questions, How? and Why? Traditional religion has sought to blunt those questions by consistently using the concept of unquestioning faith to affirm statements they can't prove but wish to believe anyway. While there are, of course, some individuals in the military community who look at life from the viewpoint of traditional religion, the overwhelming majority do not. The military religious technician is, thus, in a different type of community than he has ever faced before. His techniques must accordingly be carefully evaluated for their effectiveness with this new type of community.

Many of the men who do not claim membership in Christianity have never before, in their life, been around clergymen. In the civilian community they could easily avoid them. In the military community, however, it is not difficult for the religious technician to make contact with them (they can't get away from us if we try to contact them). In the close association possible between the military religious technician and his men the technician has an opportunity to meet them and discover their needs through informal chance meetings. Unless religion can interpret life and its non-manipulables in such a way as to bring about satisfactory adjustments, religion will not claim their allegiance. Doctrine and dogma are not enough unless that doctrine and dogma can find a basis for its claim in the knowledge of twentieth century experience. All doctrine and dogma that originated in by-gone centuries must be re-examined for its relevance for contemporary living. Since the men are re-thinking these concepts,

it behooves the religious technician to re-examine them in order to be able to understand the viewpoints of those he is trying to reach.

#### **Interdenominational Congregations**

The interdenominational aspects of the military community become evident to the Chaplain as soon as he enters the community. In the civilian community, the religious technician is mostly concerned with those who belong to his particular denomination. Of course, he compiles a constituency list from which he hopes to draw more members, but those individuals are more or less in harmony with his general religious view of life.

The religious technician in the military community must, however, deal with all of the personnel of his unit. This will include both churchmen and non-churchmen. If he is the only Chaplain, he must safeguard the religious welfare of all faiths. The Protestant Chaplain's congregation will include members from all denominations. Their worship will run the gamut of desires concerning worship from high churchmanship to the pentacostal type of service. To offer (1) a satisfactory worship service to all concerned and (2) to preach a sermon to such a group presents a number of problems. These are two points for the Chaplain to try to work out as best he can; no one has the final solution. The religious technician must be willing to experiment with the situation and build better rapport with men of the different denominations through conferences and personal interviews. With such a start he will come nearer to being able to work out a program that will suit the largest possible number of persons. As the religious technician becomes better known, by the different groups, the readier they will be to follow his leadership, even though he may lead them along unaccustomed paths. Members of the military community have, on the whole, responded in a fine way to this ecumenical trend in their community.

The above experience is refreshing, even though heartbreaking at times, in that the religious technician is forced to preach a religious approach to life that is basic to religious living while particular denominational emphasis must be subordinated to the religious welfare of the community.

This does not mean that the religious technician becomes less of a minister of his denomination. Not at all. It does mean, however, that he must minister, to the best of his ability, to the religious needs of all the personnel of his unit.

As a Methodist Chaplain it is my duty to help the Episcopalian to be a better Episcopalian, a Baptist a better Baptist. It is not my duty, nor purpose, to try to make them Methodists. In other words, the religious technician must make the most of the cohesive factors of the Christian Church instead of emphasizing the divisive ones. As he attempts to help individuals with backgrounds differing from his own, he must understand those backgrounds sufficiently to understand the individual's position. Then and only then will he be ready to show the service man what his problem means in terms of his background. The problem may make it necessary to start with the individual from where he is, with his background, and show him the additional factors in the situation that he has not faced before. The religious technician must then be able to show him how those factors may be interpreted in a religious view of life. This has been a growing experience for the present writer.

### **Counselor**

The military religious technician finds himself in the position of adviser on all types of problems. The enlisted man cannot turn to anyone else concerning many of the problems that face him. Thus, he comes to think of the Chaplain as the one to whom he should turn with any kind of a problem. The officer who wants to find someone to talk with, off-the-record, also turns to the

religious technician. Thus, the religious technician can discover, through his interviews with those needing help and advice, more about the thinking of men in a few months in the military community than he would have been able to find out through several years of pastoral work in the civilian community. In those interviews he is in closer touch with the individual than he would have been in the average civilian community. As the religious technician gains rapport with his men, they turn to him with problems that reveal their very soul. They do not do this at first, but only after they know that the religious technician is interested in them and that he can be trusted.

### **The Chaplain and His Post-War Adjustment**

In recent months, much has been written and said by the civilian church and by the theological schools concerning the re-adjustment of the returning Chaplain to the civilian pastorate. As one of these Chaplains who will be returning to civilian life at the earliest possible moment, I would like to mention a few points that should be in the thinking of those who plan such a re-conversion program for us as we leave the military community.

Some Chaplains who return will find their problem to be one of overcoming fatigue, both physical and mental. They have dealt with men under battle conditions over too long a period without relief. Their main problem will be that of rest and replenishing their mental stores after such depletion. They also need an opportunity to absorb their experiences into their philosophy of life and religion.

For other Chaplains, the problem will be one of re-learning to use their library. The conditions under which they have been working have been such that they had no time to keep up any kind of program of study. When they saw so many active things that

they could be doing, they lost their interest in academic pursuits. For these Chaplains, the main problem will be one of re-learning to study in order that they may adequately prepare themselves to lead their congregations in significant advancements in religious thought.

As the religious technician again takes his place in the civilian community he will find himself misinformed on a few points of the church program. If he should take a refresher course in seminary, the two fields listed below will be areas in which he would gain much value through class work and the third suggestion is given to indicate how important it is for the returning religious technician to have time to evaluate the significance of his experiences for the fields of religion and society.

**1. Religious Education.** One of the important fields for review will be that of religious education, especially as applied to children. In the military community, religious education is employed in everything the Chaplain does, but since he does not deal with children and youth, he will have become uncertain of himself in dealing with those age groups.

**2. Church Organization.** A course in church organization should be made one of the focal points of a refresher course. For those men who have been in the military community for a number of years, a review in this field will help bring them up to date on changes that have been made since they left the civilian community. If church policy can be combined in the course, so much the better.

**3. Rest and Reflection.** Above all, and I don't know how this can be done either by groups or in classes, the returning religious technician must have time to evaluate his experiences with reference to his total life pattern. If he fails to do this and attempts to live on or in the experiences and reputation of

having been a Chaplain, he will find his adjustment to the civilian community made more difficult. Perhaps this could be worked out by planning the year's work in such a way that the first quarter and a half would be a gradual introduction into the academic work, at first allowing time for more rest and reflection. Then as time goes on, increase the academic requirements until in the last third of the year the individual would be back on a straight seminary schedule.

Many of the Chaplains, even including some of those who have been under strenuous battle conditions, but who have since had an opportunity to recuperate while in the service, will not necessarily be a problem to the civilian church so far as their reconversion program is concerned. There will be some returning Chaplains who may have characteristics, such as "outspokenness," that may prove uncomfortable to their congregations, even distressing at times, but will not necessarily be abnormal. The Chaplain may only have **changed** instead of becoming non-adjusted.

### **Chaplains in the Civilian Community**

The religious technician, as he returns to the civilian community will take with him an understanding of men, their problems, ways of thinking, and a knowledge of how to talk their language that he did not bring with him into the Chaplaincy. Wise is the church that will capitalize upon these techniques that have been developed by her returning religious technicians while they were in the military community.

A vigorous program for men must be developed if the church is to provide effective leadership for the generation just coming to the age of influence as it attempts to work out the problems facing the world. Before the church can exert an influence, it must convince those men, who will guide the thinking and destinies of our country, that the church has something to offer to the

life of our country, something vital enough that they will want to take advantage of it.

The writer is aware of the influence that the church has exercised in the life of our country, but that influence is as nothing in comparison to the challenge that now faces the church. The religious technicians in the military community have touched a large segment of society that has never been in contact with the church before. Of course the Chaplains have not been able to make church members of them, but, on the other hand, the Chaplains, while providing moral and religious guidance to their unit have thus encroached upon the thinking of this group of men. Religion became more important in their lives by the very fact that the Chaplain is an officer with a certain degree of authority in the military community. Is the church prepared to continue this contact after the war? It has not in the past. It will be all too easy to shrug off such a vast job as impossible. However, in the familiar words of Jesus, the writer suggests,

"Ask, and what you ask will be given you. Search, and you will find what you search for. Knock, and the door will open for you. For it is always the one who asks who receives, and the one who searches who finds, and the one who knocks to whom the door opens."

The military religious technician has been able in many instances to re-establish broken bonds of church membership with men who have dropped from the religious life of the civilian community. Unless a significant men's program is instituted, many of these individuals will again lose interest in the church.

The military religious technician has learned how to deal with men from hard work and experience over many months of living with them. The civilian religious technician, however, can gain the same experience by following

a method of work in the following manner. At the same time, the vital men's program mentioned above would be activated in the process.

Each minister should take the names of fifty men on the constituency list of his church. These fifty should be his special challenge. The religious technician would visit these men in their offices, shops, or wherever their work may be. He would become acquainted with them as men, as individuals with certain ideas about the world and society. He would lunch with them. He would discover, in the process, as much about their work as possible. He would learn of their backgrounds, visit in their homes, invite them to the parsonage. Finally, when the individual comes to the place that he knows the religious technician sufficiently, he will commence to ask questions. These questions will be exploratory in the beginning, but will presently be directed toward those elements of life that underlies much of his thinking, namely, questions to which the answers fall in the field of religion.

When this stage is reached, the religious technician must be prepared to give him a view of religion, and of God that will be consistent with the world in which we live. That view must interpret life, man, and God in terms of an unified universe.

Were the civilian religious technician to carry out such a program as this he could have done in his civilian community what the military religious technician has been doing in his. The civilian religious technician would then be prepared to deal with returning service men.

The interdenominational aspects of the Chaplain's work will undoubtedly affect his work all the rest of his life. It will also have affected the lives and thinking of those men who have listened to the sermons in the military community. Just what their judgment will be of the civilian church program remains to be seen, but the clamor for



more religious unity would seem to indicate that the work of the military religious technician is another step toward emphasis upon religious living and thinking rather than upon denominational approaches to life.

**Guardian of Morale.** While the religious technician has always been interested in the attitudes expressed by his community, yet he has not been as definitely responsible for guiding the morale of his community as the military religious technician. Morale goes much deeper than mere entertainment. Over a long period of time it means giving the individual the idea that his community is interested in him as an individual and let him know that he will receive individual treatment in his problems.

Through his experience in working with the problem of morale, the military religious technician should be better prepared to apply these techniques in handling some of the situations within the civilian community, such as juvenile problems, etc. I am convinced that much of the problem of adult and

juvenile delinquency in the civilian community should be handled as a morale problem rather than a moral problem. In handling a problem as one of morale, we set up conditions under which the resultant action will be that of moral conduct.

In conclusion: The church does not need to worry over much about the problem of its returning religious technicians. Much of the so-called problem involved is not inherent in the military religious technician, but in the attitudes and financial arrangements of the civilian technicians and churches.

As the religious technician returns to the civilian pastorate, do not look upon his years in the Chaplaincy as an interlude in religious work. Do not regard him as belonging to a species apart. He has carried religion to the military community when the religious needs of that community called for his skills. As the need in the military community lessened, he will change back to the civilian community, continuing all the while, his work as a religious technician.