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THE MINISTRY OF SERVICE: A CRITICAL PRACTICO-THEOLOGICAL

EXAMINATION OF THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE AND ITS REFORMULATION

FOR MILITARY CHAPLAINS

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ABSTRACT

THE MINISTRY OF SERVICE: A CRITICAL PRACTICO-THEOLOGICAL
EXAMINATION OF THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE AND ITS REFORMULATION
FOR MILITARY CHAPLAINS

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Graduate School, 2011

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For centuries, the military chaplaincy has been guided by an applied ministry paradigm known succinctly as the ministry of presence. Although this model has served the chaplaincy well in many ways, it is not without its ideological, theological, biblical, and practical weaknesses. This work purposes to illuminate some of these weaknesses, while at the same time affirming the various strengths of presence ministry. In the end, however, this thesis will propose an alternate ministerial model for the military chaplaincy, namely, the ministry of service. Unlike its presence-ministry counterpart, the ministry of service will be shown to harmonize better with biblical revelation, conservative theological commitments, and commonsensical faith practice. Although it is not without its own weaknesses, the ministry of service will be shown as a superior alternative to its forebear.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Military chaplaincy is driven by an axiomatic ministerial paradigm known

succinctly as the ministry of presence.[1] This benchmark of practical ministry has guided

American military chaplains from the streets of Lexington and Concord, through the

battlefields of Gettysburg and Antietam, to the hedgerows of Normandy, across the rice

patties of Vietnam, and into the mountains of Afghanistan and the ever-expansive deserts

of Iraq. Chaplains across all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces have been encouraged

through the centuries by their proponencies, chaplain-training directorates, and peers to

be incarnational representatives of God. Theirs is billed as an *in situ*, empathetic ministry

of coming alongside service members in the midst of their life struggles and

circumstantial exigencies.

Yet, as foundational and infused as the ministry of presence is to the military

chaplain's vocation, there remains an ambiguity to it. In the first place, the concept is not

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[1] Examples include U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, *Religious Ministry in the U.S. Navy*, Navy Warfighting Publication (NWP) 1-05 (Washington, DC, 2003), 4-2; U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, *Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps*, Marine Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 6-12 (Washington, DC, 2009), 6-11; U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Religious Support*, Field Manual (FM) 1-05 (Washington, DC, 2003), 1-5; U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, *Chaplain Service Readiness*, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 52-104 (Washington, DC, 2006), 70.

well defined in doctrinal literature published by the U.S. Department of Defense or its

individual service components. Therefore, in order to build a workable definition of this

ministerial paradigm, military chaplains are often forced to turn to civilian academic

sources or to rely on denominational or popular interpretations. Apart from the

unreliability of some of these sources and their typical want of military-ministry context,

there is the ancillary problem of multiplicity. That is to say, extant definitions and

explanations of the ministry of presence vary considerably from one source to another.

As one surveys and analyzes various definitions of the ministry of presence,

however, three general characterizations emerge. First, the ministry of presence is

sometimes envisaged as a vehicle of hope. That is to say, the chaplain's physical and

emotional presence among his troops is thought to bring a sense of peace, ethico-moral

stability, and spiritual perspective that at once settles the service members' spirits and

offers the anticipation of a positive future. At other times, it is believed to be a means of

promoting divine sanctification, whereby the chaplain's physical, emotional, and spiritual

presence is thought to somehow bring with it the actual presence of God. In this light,

pastor and counselor Brita Gill writes, "A ministry of presence allows the sacred to

unfold in each of us and between us. A ministry of presence reminds us that God's

revelation does not come to us in the discovery of specific knowledge about God's

essence as much as it does in the unfolding of an ever-faithful Presence."[2] Finally, there

are occasions when the ministry of presence is perceived to have similitude with acts of

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[2] Brita Gill, "A Ministry of Presence," *Quarterly Review* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 21.

service. In such instances, the holistic presence[3] of the chaplain operates as a medium through which he functions as a servant to his people. His presence, in other words, is efficacious insofar as he performs acts of service for those under his spiritual care, thereby demonstrating the love and mercy of God to others.

At first glance, each of the above perspectives on the ministry of presence would seem to have merit. A chaplain's presence among his flock of service members no doubt brings joy, peace, and hope to those whom he ministers. Again, by modeling a virtuous lifestyle and mediating the grace and love of God to his people, the chaplain surely has a sanctifying influence upon those with whom he comes into contact.[4] Finally, in his service to others, the chaplain certainly incarnates the love of God in a practical and perspicuous way.

Nevertheless, there is an inherent—albeit subtle—danger in this approach to ministry. Presence as the starting point and foundation of ministry sounds innocuous enough until one considers the chaplain-centric nature of it. That is, when the ministerial outcomes of hope, sanctity, and/or service are subsumed under a ministry of presence, the focus is placed squarely on the chaplain as mediator of each of these. It is *his*[5] presence that results in each of the aforementioned outcomes. Presence, then, becomes the cornerstone of the ministerial endeavor. Indeed, such an obvious focus on the person of

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[3] When used in this thesis, "holistic presence" refers to the chaplain's emotional, physical, and spiritual presence among his people.

[4] The extent and manner of this sanctification will be discussed in a later chapter.

[5] The masculine pronoun is used here and elsewhere in order to avoid the cumbersome "his/her" and "his or her" or "he/she" and "he or she" constructs. Nevertheless, it is recognized that both male and female officers serve in the chaplain corps.

the chaplain and his localized presence risks becoming narcissistic or sanctimonious. Moreover, it diverges somewhat from the other-centric and theocentric expectations of Scripture articulated in such passages as Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18, Psalm 118:8, Matthew 22:36-40, and Luke 10:27.

Admittedly, the ministry of presence is praiseworthy in its effort to place the chaplain in an incarnational ministry context. Yet, it does so by creating an intercessory persona, of sorts, for the chaplain. Again, it is *his* presence that actuates hope, sanctity, and service. In high liturgical settings or in denominations where priestly models are employed, such a role for the chaplain may be favored. However, for those who subscribe to a more conservative, evangelical theology, there is an innate offensiveness in this notion.

Additionally, there is a real threat of misapplication attendant to the concept of presence ministry. The chaplain can too easily assume that merely "being there" is sufficient for Gospel ministry. This naturally warrants much concern. Believers in Christ Jesus are not called simply to be present physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually; rather, they are called to be disciple-makers and proclaimers of God's truth. A presence-ministry model can potentially conceal or forfeit these aspects of faith praxis.

Finally, the ministry-of-presence model fails to highlight clear biblical injunctions unto Christian servanthood.[6] Though servanthood is no doubt linked to the ministry of presence in some sense (see above definitions), it nonetheless occupies a decidedly secondary or even tertiary role. This would seem to contradict the patent teachings of

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[6] Unless otherwise indicated, the words "service," "Christian service," "servanthood," and "Christian servanthood" are used synonymously when referring to faith praxis in the present work.

Christ and the admonitions of his apostles. Biblical servanthood is a pivotal element of faith and spiritual discipline. As such, there is a necessity that it occupy a dominant position in any ministry paradigm.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is quite simply to evaluate the current understanding of the ministry of presence, demonstrate its inherent weaknesses from an evangelical Christian perspective, acknowledge its numerous strengths, and, in the end, propose an alternate, more biblically-based ministerial paradigm for the evangelical military chaplain. It must be noted that this thesis will not attempt to disparage or otherwise discard the many positive aspects of the ministry of presence. Incarnational presence ministry[7] has been a mainstay of the military chaplaincy for centuries and, in many respects, has satisfactorily guided ministry within the Armed Services. However, it is the intent herein to offer a fresh perspective on the ministry of presence. This will require not only a paradigmatic shift, of sorts, but also a re-identification or reformulation of the ministerial axiom itself.

As implied above, this thesis is intended for a select audience, namely, evangelical (mainly conservative) Christian chaplains. Though high liturgical and non-Christian chaplains may find some useful information in this work, they will no doubt experience a lack of spiritual and contextual kinship with many of the ideas proffered. Exclusiveness is certainly not the goal of this thesis; however, the theological perspective from and through which this topic is approached will certainly result in some manner of

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[7] The terms "ministry of presence," "presence ministry," and "ministerial presence" are used synonymously and derivatively throughout this thesis.

inimitability. Even so, it is hoped that all readers, regardless of their presuppositions or

prior theological commitments, will recognize the honorable intentions of this endeavor.

The ultimate aim is not to divide chaplains along theological lines or to argue theo-

philosophical nuances; rather, it is to serve better the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and

marines of the U.S. Armed Forces and to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

It is important to use the proper ministerial paradigm, not in order to split

theological hairs or engage in games of semantics, but to maximize the evangelistic

potential of the Christian military chaplain. Based on data garnered from the Defense

Manpower Data Center, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission reported in June

2010 that roughly 19.55% of service members in the U.S. Armed Services claim no

religious preference. Another 1.79% of service members purport to be Jewish, Muslim,

Pagan, Eastern, Humanist, or adherents of other less common, non-Christian religions.[8]

This means that approximately 21.34% of all service members proclaim to be irreligious

or devotees of religious faith groups other than Christianity.   When one considers the

unknown percentage of Christian claimants in these statistics who are only nominal

believers or who have so diverged from their faith practices as to render themselves

ostensible non-Christians, this percentage is certainly much higher. Consequently, there

is a practical and incidental evangelistic mandate in the military today that cannot be

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[8] Statistics retrieved from Military Leadership Diversity Commission, "Issue Paper #22, Religious Diversity in the U.S. Military," http://mldc.whs.mil/download/documents/Issue%20Papers/22_Religious_Diversity.pdf (accessed July 5, 2011). The Defense Manpower Data Center statistics were obtained from data collected in 2009.

ignored or taken lightly. If the ministry of presence can be evaluated, refined, and

repurposed in order to increase its potential for evangelistic success, then there is an

inherent obligation to do so.

Statement of Position on the Problem

As noted earlier, there are significant dangers associated with the ministry of

presence, not the least of which is its inherent egoism. The model, for all of its good

points, places the chaplain on center stage. It is *his* presence that becomes the key to

unlocking the benefits of hope, sanctity, and service. Such a chaplain-centric paradigm

certainly runs the risk of encouraging sanctimony and/or the theology of intermediation,

neither of which is prescribed within the pages of Scripture. On the contrary, a biblical

understanding of the role of Christian clergy and leaders is clearly one of servanthood.

In his relationship with the Almighty, the Christian leader—indeed every

Christian—is called to be a *doulos*. The word *doulos* is used an astounding 124 times in

the New Testament[9] principally to describe the subordinate/superior relationship

essential in monarchical or hierarchical systems. When used to express the association

between Christ and his followers, the hierarchy is unmistakable. Christ is depicted as

King and Lord, and his followers are commissioned as servants and slaves.

The Christian leader is also summoned in the New Testament to be a *diakonos* or

leitourgos, either of which regularly describes one who serves or ministers to the needs of

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[9] John MacArthur, *Slave: The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in Christ* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 15-16.

others.[10] Indeed, it is from *diakonos* that the church acquires its word "deacon," that is,

one who engages in helps or outreach-type ministries. Jesus even described his own

earthly ministry in terms of *diakoneō* in such verses as Matthew 20:28 and Luke 22:27.[11]

In short, there is a patent expectation that the one who serves God will also serve others.

This is not surprising considering Jesus' response to the Pharisee who inquired as to the

greatest commandment in the Mosiac Law. Jesus declared, "'Love the Lord your God

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and

greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All

the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:37-40). Clearly,

biblical love has both vertical and horizontal components. It is therefore logical to

conclude that the outward expression of love, namely, servanthood, would also evidence

these same components. Believers are commissioned to serve both God and their

fellowman.

Certainly, even a cursory reading of the New Testament leaves little doubt as to

the other-centric and theocentric service expectations placed upon Christian laity and

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[10] The word *leitourgos* can describe both community service and service in a liturgical sense. Context is obviously the key in determining which specific interpretation to apply. Regardless of the nuance, however, *leitourgos* clearly denotes service focused on others. See Lawrence O. Richards, "Servant," in *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 551-552.

[11] Unless otherwise indicated, many of the biblical cross references for Greek and Hebrew words as well as much of the grammatical, syntactical, and morphological information for original language studies in this work were procured through use of the interlinear, exegetical guide, and passage guide features in Logos 4 Bible Software (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2011). Other sources utilized in conjunction with Logos 4 included Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993) and James Strong, *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, 21ˢᵗ Century Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

clergy alike. In fact, these clearly occupy a critical role in Gospel ministry. Any viable

paradigm for the military chaplaincy should therefore accentuate these aspects and afford

them centrality. For the reasons mentioned earlier, the ministry of presence is of

questionable efficacy in this regard. As such, this thesis will propose an alternate

paradigm referred to henceforth as the *ministry of service*. By laying the foundation upon

service vice presence, the intent is to remove the chaplain-centric burden of presence

ministry and replace it with the other-centeredness and theocentricity of biblical

servanthood.

Of course, reformulating the ministerial axiom and thereby shifting its focus does

not abrogate the need to deal with the products of hope and sanctity that currently help

define the ministry of presence. As stated earlier, there is a definite sense in which the

chaplain's ministry does, in fact, bring hope and sanctity to the service member and/or

the military unit. Nevertheless, this thesis will defend the proposition that these products

have little to do with the chaplain's localized presence or any spiritual "aura" he might

exhibit; rather, they are essentially and decidedly the fruit of *God's* demonstrations of

love, grace, and mercy through the chaplain's selfless act(s) of service. That is to say, the

ministry of service will conceptualize the chaplain as merely a tool in the hand of God.

Admittedly, one cannot ignore the chaplain's localized presence in the ministry-

of-service model. The ministry of service is obviously incarnational and, consequently,

physical, emotional, and spiritual presence do indeed factor into what will be referred to

herein as "ministerial authority."[12] Nevertheless, presence will be shown as a natural

outflow of service rather than the antithesis, as proposed via the current presence-

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[12] "Ministerial authority" cannot be defined *prima facie*. As such, this term will
be painstakingly defined in Chapter 4.

ministry model. Presence will remain an important factor in the ministry of service;

however, its preeminence will be challenged.

It must be noted that nothing aforementioned in this section is meant to imply that

service is the end-state goal of Gospel ministry within the military chaplaincy. Indeed,

biblical servanthood is an important expression of genuine love for God and love for

others. Nevertheless, this expression of love must ultimately eventuate in proclamation

of the Gospel. Servanthood, as critical as it is to the evangelistic endeavor, must never be

employed to the exclusion of the Gospel message itself. According to Scripture,

Christians are called to both word and deed (cf. Ps. 119, Rom. 10:17, Jas. 1:19, et al.).

The subsequent chapters will seek to make this point unambiguously.

Limitations

There are three principal limitations in this study. First, the ministry of presence

has culturo-psychological inertia within the military chaplaincy. As such, any attempt to

criticize and reformulate it will certainly meet with opposition. Secondly, much of the

evidence utilized to make the present case is necessarily circumstantial in nature. The

Bible does not directly address the chaplain ministry nor does it speak forthrightly about

either the ministry of presence or the ministry of service. Though this author believes the

latter is more prudent on the basis of biblical evidence and reason, it is by no means

incontrovertible or unassailable. Finally, as noted earlier, this thesis is largely addressed

to evangelical, Christian chaplains. Since the military chaplaincy is comprised of Jewish,

Muslim, Buddhist, and Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians, there is an

exclusionism intrinsic to this work. Though this is not desired, it is an unavoidable

consequence of pluralism and denominationalism within the U.S. Armed Forces.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

Introduction

Since the topic under examination in this thesis is the ministry of presence as it

applies to military chaplaincy, there is a necessity to provide a foundational, working

definition of the same within said context. Unfortunately, such is not an easy task. In the

first place, definitions for the ministry of presence found in extra-military sources[13] are

practically as numerous as the persons who attempt to describe it. Moreover, even

though military regulations and other Department-of-Defense (DOD) publications discuss

the ministry of presence, they do so without adequately delineating the particular

elements of this ministerial paradigm. That is to say, there is an obvious assumption that

readers of these documents already have a working knowledge of presence ministry. No

standard, DOD-approved definition of the ministry of presence currently exists.

Nevertheless, there are several conceptual categories that clearly surface when

one begins to sort through the various civilian and military sources that deal with the

subject of presence ministry. Three are prominent. These include presence as hope,

presence as sanctification, and presence as service. The remainder of this chapter will be

dedicated to a brief survey of these three categories as well as the formulation of a

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[13] These are sources not published by the Department of Defense or any other
governmental agency. Authors of these sources, however, may be affiliates or former
affiliates of the federal, state, or local government.

working definition of the ministry of presence to serve as a springboard for the remainder of the thesis. Needless to say, neither the aforementioned triad nor its concomitant working definition provides an exhaustive illustration of the many brands of presence ministry. To the contrary, they provide only a general approximation of this ministerial paradigm. Even so, this generalized approach adequately serves the purposes of the present work.

Presence as Hope

Potentially the most intuitive notion of presence ministry is one in which the chaplain's holistic presence among his troops is thought to bring a sense of peace, comfort, moral stability, and spiritual perspective that at once settles the service members' spirits while at the same time offering the promise of positive outcomes for the future. The idea that this manner of presence—herein labeled "presence as hope"—leads to the building of trust and camaraderie between the chaplain and his troops makes it an attractive template for military ministry. Many within the military chaplaincy feel compelled to justify themselves and their ministries continually before commanders and peers as well as those outside of the military who seek to abolish the chaplaincy.[14] Consequently, any paradigm that promotes the legitimacy and practical relevancy of the chaplain corps is certainly welcome among its constituents.

Former Army chaplain Donald W. Holdridge, Sr., obviously favors the presence-as-hope model when he writes, "This [i.e., ministry of presence] is chaplain's lingo for

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[14] Pauletta Otis, "An Overview of the U.S. Military Chaplaincy: A Ministry of Presence and Practice," *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 7, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 9-10.

being out and about with soldiers. . . . Soldiers seem to like it when their chaplain, who is

an officer, goes through the gas chamber with them, or sits on the ground with them

swatting flies and eating the same Chicken Stew MRE (Meals Ready to Eat, or Meals

Rarely Eaten!) as they are having."[15] Likewise, current Army chaplain Brian Bohlman

demonstrates a similar penchant (at least in part). He opines, ". . . military chaplains have

an opportunity to open up God's Word as a source of strength and comfort to warriors."[16]

Moreover, various DOD resources dealing with military chaplaincy activities and

chaplain duties and responsibilities place a high premium on the chaplain's role as a

morale- and team-builder as well as on his ability to bring comfort in time of conflict and

chaos.[17] In fact, the religious support field manual for the U.S. Army Chaplaincy (FM 1-

05) states succinctly and poignantly, "Through prayer and presence, the UMT provides

the soldier with courage and comfort in the face of death."[18]

However, it is not just military chaplains or former military chaplains who

recognize the efficacy of "presence as hope." Seminary professors Naomi K. Paget and

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[15] Donald W. Holdridge, Sr., "A Military Chaplaincy Ministry," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 116.

[16] Brian L. Bohlman, "For God and Country: Considering the Call to Military Chaplaincy," DMin diss., Erskine Theological Seminary, 2008, 40-41.

[17] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, *Religious Ministry in the Navy*, OPNAV Instruction (OPNAVINST) 1730.1D (Washington, DC, 2003), 5; U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, *Chaplain Service*, Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 52-1 (Washington, DC, 2006), 1; U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, *Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps*, Marine Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 6-12, 6-11.

[18] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Religious Support*, Field Manual (FM) 1-05, 1-5. The acronym "UMT" stands for "Unit Ministry Team." A UMT is typically composed of one chaplain and one chaplain assistant.

Janet R. McCormack[19] have made quite clear their preference for this viewpoint. In their

popular work on the role of civilian and military chaplains, Paget and McCormack affirm

unequivocally,

> Chaplain ministry has often been called the "ministry of presence."
> Presence is both physical and emotional. First, the chaplain makes a conscious
> choice to be physically present with the client. Second, the chaplain is
> emotionally present with the client through empathetic listening. Through
> presence the chaplain begins to build the relationship that eventually brings
> comfort to those who feel alone in their suffering or despair.
> . . . for the experienced spiritual care provider, the art of "hanging out"
> with patients, clients, victims, or team members becomes an intentional event that
> leads to providing a calm presence during times of stress and chaos. The . . .
> chaplain practices intentional presence—"loitering with intent" to calm, to build
> relationships, to provide compassion.[20]

Furthermore, in her landmark historical account of the military chaplaincy entitled *The*

Sword of the Lord, Doris L. Bergen describes the popularity of chaplains throughout U.S.

military history as a result of the individual chaplain's unique ability to encourage hope,

comfort, and bravery in the midst of death, destruction, and horror.[21] Like Paget,

McCormack, Holdridge, Bohlman, and others, Bergen clearly recognizes the optimistic

potentiality of presence ministry.

Of course, examples of authors, scholars, and chaplains who subscribe to the

presence-as-hope model could proceed practically *ad infinitum*. However, the point is

clear: the ideology of "presence as hope" is quite ubiquitous and popular. Even so, it is

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[19] Admittedly, McCormack is a retired U.S. Air Force chaplain. However, Paget has no historical affiliation with the military chaplain corps.

[20] Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 27.

[21] Doris L. Bergen, "Introduction," in *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Doris L. Bergen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 13.

by no means the only interpretation of this largely ill-defined "doctrine" of practical ministry. Two additional archetypes exist and need to be discussed.

Presence as Sanctification

The second model of presence ministry that finds considerable support in the scholarly and popular literature is what this thesis refers to as "presence as sanctification." In this brand of the ministry of presence, the chaplain is thought to mediate the actual presence of God in some sense. That is to say, his presence among the troops is not simply representative or symbolic of God; rather, it translates at some level to an authentic manifestation of the Almighty—a "sacramental presence," as it were.[22] God reveals Himself through the presence of His minister—the chaplain.

Richard G. Moore could scarce be clearer in his preference for this definition. He writes, "Ministry, born in the crucible of relationship, is the work of the church to establish the presence of the living God in the lives of people."[23] Some have gone so far as to describe presence ministry as a "real meeting" of God through the person of the minister.[24] Still others have likened the ministry of presence to a holy sanctuary built, as

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[22] Although most liturgical ministers limit "sacramental presence" to the Eucharistic ministry wherein divine presence is elicited through the priest during observance of the Lord's Supper, Paul Cedar, Kent Hughes, and Ben Patterson have used this term to refer to the actuation of divine presence consequent to a much larger breadth of ministerial activity. See Paul Cedar, R. Kent Hughes, and Ben Patterson, *Mastering the Pastoral Role* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1991), 22-23.

[23] Richard G. Moore, "The Military Chaplaincy as Ministry," ThM thesis, The Divinity School of Duke University, 1993, 78.

[24] Gill, 21.

it were, by the physical attendance of the chaplain.[25] However, the quintessential

example of this understanding of presence ministry is found in the work of Paget and

McCormack who contend,

> The presence of God in the person and ministry of the chaplain empowers the
> client to healing and wholeness. Chaplains are ordinary people with no
> supernatural power of their own. But in partnership with the presence of God,
> chaplains bring calm to chaos, victory over despair, comfort in loss, and
> sufficiency in need. Chaplains practice the presence of God through prayer, rites,
> rituals, listening, the spoken word, the holy scriptures, and acts of service. Clients
> often perceive the chaplain as the "God person" in their midst. The very presence
> of the chaplain reminds the client that God is very present to them. Chaplains
> share God's presence with clients even as they share their own presence and
> words of assurance—"I am with you."[26]

Definitions such as Paget and McCormack's could certainly lead to charges of

mysticism or elevation of the minister/chaplain to a place of unwarranted, extra-biblical

esteem. To describe the chaplain as a "God person" is certainly provocative to those of a

more evangelical, low-liturgical, or non-liturgical bent. Yet, in fairness to adherents of

this viewpoint, their object is typically not to propose some manner of transcendent or

supernatural station for the chaplain. To the contrary, they are simply suggesting that the

contextual presence of the chaplain among his people brings with it a genuine sense of

God's presence as well. Proponents would no doubt agree that God's presence is

ultimately independent of ministerial presence. However, in the eyes of those who are in

despair, who are hurting, or who are otherwise in need, God is made real to them through

the ministrations of His chaplain. That is to say, God's presence is catalyzed by

ministerial presence.

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[25] Joanne Benham Rennick, "Canadian Military Chaplains: Bridging the Gap between Alienation and Operational Effectiveness in a Pluralistic and Multicultural Context," *Religion, State, & Society* 39, no. 1 (March 2011): 100; Moore, 91.

[26] Paget and McCormack, 28.

Presence as Service

The third and final definition of presence ministry revealed in contemporary literature is generalized herein as "presence as service." In this model, the chaplain is viewed not so much as a ministry leader or liturgical figure but, rather, as a servant of God. Consequently, "presence as service" envisages the chaplain's role as one of biblical servanthood.   His ministry is not principally defined by the confidence and hope he encourages or by the presence of God he in some wise mediates. To the contrary, the chaplain's ministerial task is essentially governed by the attitude and activity of his service and sacrifice for others. The chaplain is more than a figurehead or spiritual luminary; he is first and foremost a Christian worker whose effectuality hinges on his ability to meet and adapt to the needs of others.[27]

Bohlman clearly advocates for "presence as service." In his dissertation on the roles and responsibilities of military chaplains, he stresses, "As military chaplains build friendships with troops in their unit, they become better prepared *to serve them* in time of need. . . . as they provide a ministry of presence in the U.S. Armed Forces."[28] Furthermore, as part of his definition of "minister" in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, J. F. Hopewell states unequivocally,

> While concepts and roles of the minister vary considerably, most are rooted in the image of servant (L. *minister*, Gr. *diakonos*). Servanthood expresses the concrete and constant commitment of a person to God and humanity, participating in God's mission in the world and attending the world's people.[29]

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[27] Donald F. Carter, "The Military Chaplain: The Framework within Which He Serves," *Grace Journal* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 11-12.

[28] Bohlman, 40, emphasis added.

[29] J. F. Hopewell, "Ministry," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, eds. Rodney J. Hunter and Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 730.

Moreover, practical theologians often speak of ministry (i.e., presence ministry) in terms of servant leadership or, as Richard R. Osmer has defined it, "suffering in the pursuit of one's calling, or vocation, suffering in the face of conflict and resistance."[30] Even Paget and McCormack's support of "presence as sanctification" includes "acts of service" as a crucial element in the ministerial activity of a chaplain.[31]

Of course, what exactly constitutes "service" is somewhat different for every chaplain, author, and/or scholar. Denominational, experiential, philosophical, and theological variances certainly drive these dissimilarities. Even so, "service" as a chaplain/minister can be consolidated under three general categories.[32] First, there is the chaplain's service as a spiritual guide and mentor. In this capacity, he performs duties such as pastoral counseling, mentorship counseling, hospital visitation, field/troop visitation, family care, and other individual "needs-based ministry."[33] Secondly, chaplains serve as crisis interventionists and humanitarian support personnel. When personal, natural, and other calamities strike, chaplains are typically among the first responders on the scene. Finally, the chaplain serves as the celebrant of sacraments, rites, and ordinances as well as the planner and executor of religious education programs and

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[30] Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 192.

[31] See block quote in the previous section.

[32] These categories are adapted from the three categories of "services of the chaplain" as proposed by former Army National Guard State Chaplain (South Carolina) Charles E. Grooms. See Charles E. Grooms, *The Chaplain: Fighting the Bullets* (Raleigh, NC: Ivy House, 2002), 57.

[33] "Needs-based ministry" is a term utilized extensively by the U.S. Air Force Chaplaincy as part of its Global Ministry model. See U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, *Chaplain Service*, Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 52-1, 1.

religious support training.[34] This latter category, quite obviously, encompasses some of the archetypal duties of chaplain as servant.

In light of the above, one might summarize chaplain "service" by the acronym M.R.E.[35]—Mentor, Responder, Educator-Liturgist. It is within and among these broad-spectrum roles that the chaplain demonstrates servanthood to his people. Of course, many functional gradations exist; nevertheless, these categories provide a starting point for discussion of service within the military chaplaincy and its ministry of presence.

Ministry of Presence Summarized

Notwithstanding the definitional categories presented in this chapter, it would be erroneous to conclude that supporters of presence ministry necessarily fall exclusively into one of three camps. In fact, as even brief scrutiny of the above sections reveals, there are many like Paget and McCormack who subscribe in some way to each of the above classifications. In truth, most extant definitions of presence ministry are highly nuanced and, thus, no simple schematic will ultimately suffice. At the same time, the student of practical theology must be able to place this issue into some sort of grid in order to discuss and critique it. For this reason, an overarching, working definition of presence ministry is essential.

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[34] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Religious Support*, Field Manual (FM) 1-05, 1-6.

[35] The acronym M.R.E. is familiar to every service member in the U.S. Armed Forces. It stands for "Meals Ready to Eat" and represents the pre-packaged, shelf-stable meals that are regularly served to troops in the field and on overseas and other deployments.

Using the above categories as a launching pad for this endeavor, and recognizing

that each has warrant in the effort to conceptualize and summarize this oft-ambiguous

ideology, the following working definition is proposed as it relates to the military

chaplaincy:

> The ministry of presence affirms that the military chaplain's presence among his troops encourages hope for the future and comfort for the present, fosters a realization of the genuine presence and providence of God, and provides opportunities for biblical servanthood as the chaplain ministers to the needs of his people. Indeed, it is the physical, emotional, and spiritual presence of the chaplain that actuates efficacy in ministry.

Naturally, this is not an all-inclusive description of presence ministry;

nevertheless, it does offer several important features for the present study. First, it

presents a general definition of the ministry of presence based upon common

denominators discovered in applicable civilian and military literary sources. Secondly,

the above definition is simple and non-obtrusive, thereby avoiding significant criticism

from presence-ministry proponents and practical theologians. Finally, it clearly accounts

for the starting point or foundational principle of the presence-ministry paradigm,

namely, the physical, emotional, and spiritual presence of the chaplain. Incidentally, this

final point will become quite controversial later in the thesis.

A Note Concerning Biblico-Theological Support for Presence Ministry

Lest one assume otherwise from the above discussion, advocates for the ministry

of presence are quick to offer biblico-theological support for their paradigm. In the first

place, devotees point to Christ's holistic presence among His disciples and first-century

Palestinians as an object lesson in presence ministry. Passages such as Luke 24:12-35[36]

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[36] Bohlman, 39-41.

and Philippians 2:4[37] are touted as representative. Just as Christ ministered to others by maintaining a viable presence, so, too, should contemporary ministers of the Gospel. Bohlman summarizes his proposal well when he writes, "The Gospel of Luke records the ministry of presence that Jesus provided . . . In the same way, military chaplains are called to be with and walk alongside those dealing with pain, suffering, and grief . . ."[38]

Moreover, many adherents of presence ministry contend that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the person of the chaplain inspires ministerial presence and, thus, brings to bear—in some sense—the real presence of God.[39] In other words, indwelling presence and ministerial presence work synergistically to effectuate divine presence. J. R. Peyton could not be more poignant in his support of this notion. He writes, "Therefore, when the Spirit-filled Apostolic chaplain walks through a hospital, the very Father of creation and Son of redemption live inside of his heart as God's Spirit. However, the very omnipresence of this same God allows that same Spirit to both proceed and to follow the chaplain in his rounds."[40] As support for his hypothesis, Peyton offers the leaping of John the Baptist within Elizabeth's womb in the presence of Mary, who was effectively "indwelled" at the time by the incarnated Christ (Luke 1:39-

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[37] Holdridge, 116.

[38] Bohlman, 40.

[39] J. R. Peyton, "The Ministry of Presence," speech delivered to UGST Symposium, October 29-30, 2009, *A Call to Build: Doing Church in the 21st Century*, Urshan Graduate School of Theology, St. Louis, MO, http://urshan.ccsct.com/page.cfm?p=613 (accessed November 5, 2011), 11-12. This is quite obviously the justification used by those who subscribe to the presence-as-sanctification model described earlier.

[40] Ibid., 11.

42).[41] That is to say, divine presence was experienced by Elizabeth and John precisely because of the "indwelling" (i.e., *in utero*) presence of Christ within Mary. The virgin's ministerial presence was invigorated by the actual presence of God inside of her.

Finally, proponents of presence ministry frequently point to it as a means of effective "dialectical relationship."[42] In other words, presence ministry is efficacious in the minds of its sponsors because it skillfully combines articulation of the written Word of God—referred to as the "externality of the Word"—with meaningful personal relationship.[43] They contend that proclamation of the Word of God alone is often insufficient to trigger change in the behavior and attitudes of the supplicant. However, when combined with strong interpersonal relationships, articulation of the Word can assume unprecedented power and efficacy.[44] Biblical support for this combination of revelatory proclamation and relationship-building is garnered from such narrative examples as John 4 (the Samaritan woman at the well), John 3 (the story of Nicodemus),[45] and, undoubtedly, Acts 8 (Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch).

Beyond these examples, however, little biblical support is offered in defense of the ministry of presence. This is not meant to insinuate that the above arguments are in

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[41] Ibid., 10.

[42] William O. Avery, "Toward an Understanding of Ministry of Presence," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 40, no. 4 (December 1986): 353.

[43] Ibid., 350-353.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 197.

some wise weak or deficient. Rather, it is merely intended to diagnose the dearth of enunciated biblical corroboration for presence ministry.

Conclusion

With a working definition thus in hand, it becomes possible to proceed with a critical evaluation and analysis of presence ministry in the remaining chapters of this work. The central research question in this thesis is, quite simply, "Is the ministry of presence the best paradigm to describe the appropriate attitudes and activities of the United States military chaplain?" In order to answer this question, the strengths and weaknesses of the ministry of presence will be discussed. Moreover, the paradigm will be measured against God's Word to determine its biblical soundness and defensibility. Finally, in the case of its inadequacy, a new ministerial paradigm will be introduced and defended.

CHAPTER 3

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

Introduction

As noted in the introductory chapter, the ministry of presence has guided the

practical theology of military chaplains for much of American history. In fact, this

ministerial paradigm is so engrained in the culture of the military chaplaincy that

practitioners are typically quite unsuspecting of it. Save the occasional journal article or

blurb in some larger work, the student of practical theology is want for much critical

thought on the matter. For the most part, presence ministry is accepted across all

branches of the military without question.[46]

Such practically wholesale acknowledgement of presence ministry is certainly

admirable from an organizational perspective. Indeed, consensus is highly favored

within the military. However, as ministers of faith, chaplains are not simply called to

maintain a *status quo* or to follow perfunctorily the latest trend or conventional

philosophy. To the contrary, a chaplain's highest "calling," as it were, is to represent the

tenets of his faith with integrity and devotion[47] and to bring glory to God (1 Pet. 4:10-

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[46] There are exceptions to this, of course. These will be discussed throughout the development of this chapter.

[47] Bohlman, 33-35. Bohlman's discussion clearly implies that a chaplain's calling is much more than secular wisdom. It is a "salt-and-light" ministry that is bestowed upon the chaplain by God.

11).[48] For the evangelical, Christian chaplain, this clearly translates into fidelity to Jesus

Christ, His Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), and the various implications of the

Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22:34-40). Consequently, the present chapter is not

concerned with perpetuating the storied history of military presence ministry. Rather, its

main purpose is to evaluate critically the ministry of presence in order to 1) determine its

strengths and weaknesses, 2) examine its consistency with biblical revelation, and 3)

offer a conclusion regarding its efficacy for the military chaplaincy.

Strengths of the Ministry of Presence

Whatever one's ultimate opinion of the ministry of presence, there is little doubt

that it manifests certain indisputable strengths. Three of these are noteworthy. In the

first place, presence ministry is clearly incarnational.[49] As defined by missiologists and

theologians such as J. Todd Billings, incarnational ministry is that which leaves the

confines of the formal, ecclesiastical setting to become "one with the people in need."[50]

It is ministry in and among the people group(s) served. Military chaplains certainly

aspire to and perform this type of ministry. Theirs is not a centripetal practical

theology.[51] To the contrary, presence ministry is unambiguously centrifugal in nature;

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[48] R. A. Bodey, "Ministry," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 236.

[49] Gill, 20.

[50] J. Todd Billings, "Incarnational Ministry and Christology: A Reappropriation of the Way of Lowliness," *Missiology: An International Review* 32, no. 2 (April 2004): 188.

[51] In Newtonian physics, centripetal forces are those that work to pull mass to the center of a rotating object, whereas centrifugal forces are those that work to pull mass to the periphery of the same object. As used herein, "centripetal practical theology" refers

that is, it seeks to move out from the center and to meet troops in their various situational

contexts.

      To be sure, as corporeal representatives of God, chaplains serve symbolic and

effectual roles wherein their actual presence among the troop population results in many

positive outcomes, not the least of which are hope, sanctity, and service.[52] On this point,

most would agree without qualification. By being with his troops as opposed to

remaining aloof from them, the chaplain represents well the ministry of Jesus Christ who

Himself attended to his flock in an unmistakably incarnational way. Jesus met needs

through first-hand ministry. Likewise, the military chaplain cares for his people by being

in their presence.

      The incarnational strength of military presence ministry has been recognized for

decades. Even as far back as the American Civil War, chaplains have valued an

incarnational ministry approach. Commenting on the dangers of physical and emotional

distance in the execution of chaplain ministry, Chaplain William Y. Brown wrote these

scathing words in his 1863 Army chaplaincy manual:

> With resolution, he [the chaplain] must combine energy of character, and a
> willing heart. A lazy chaplain is certainly an object of commiseration. While he
> dozes through the camp or the hospital, souls are awaking in hell, whose blood is
> upon his soul, and which will be required of him in the day of judgment. He is

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to an expectation that ministry proceeds from the troops, who are on the periphery of a
metaphorical/conceptual rotating object, to the chaplain, who is at the center of the
object. "Centrifugal practical theology," then, would describe ministry wherein the
chaplain moves from the center to the periphery, thus encouraging a physical, emotional,
and spiritual closeness with his troops.

[52] Richard R. Tupy, Jr., "Is 'Being There' Enough?" *Military Chaplains' Review*
41, no. 2 (1981): 4-5. See also the working definition of the ministry of presence in the
previous chapter.

loathed by the men; despised by the officers; and ekes out his miserable existence amidst the frowns of all honest men, and the contempt of the world.[53]

At the same time, in the inimitable and poetic style of 19th-century prose, Brown asserts that the chaplain who executes his ministry with integrity, hard work, intentionality and, by implication, incarnational sensitivities will experience "a channel, broad and deep, into which the streams of individual effort may empty, and form a majestic river, which shall flow through every valley and plain of the army, and bear upon its bosom blessings to every man . . ."[54] For its incarnational aspects, then, there is little more that needs to be said. Presence ministry finds strength and legitimacy as it encourages the chaplain to "flow through every valley and plain of the army" in his struggle to meet the needs—be they spiritual, emotional, and/or physical—of the troops to whom he attends.

A secondary strength of the presence-ministry model is its implicit promotion of the principle of teamwork—a tenet no doubt essential to military success and, thus, foundational in the U.S. Armed Forces. As he successfully negotiates his dual role of staff officer and minister, the chaplain serves as a vital link between commanders/leaders and their troops. By manifesting a real presence at all levels within his unit, the chaplain encourages support for his religious programming from commanders and staff officers, which in turn results in more opportunities for ministry and, thus, improved unit morale and individual quality of life for the troops.[55] On the contrary, as stated candidly by

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[53] William Y. Brown, *The Army Chaplain: His Office, Duties, and Responsibilities, and the Means of Aiding Him* (Trinity, AL: Sparks Media, 2010), 23.

[54] Ibid., 162.

[55] Mack C. Branham, Jr., "The Air Force Chaplain's Role: Functioning in Two Institutions," *Air University Review* 29, no. 5 (July-August 1978): 19-20, http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/AURIndex.htm (accessed June 24, 2011).

Brown above, the chaplain who eschews his corporate responsibilities is "loathed by the

men" and "despised by the officers" and generally is of little or no value to the unit.[56]

Indeed, the absentee chaplain stands juxtaposed to the concept of team and the ideal of

camaraderie.

Army Field Manual (FM) 1-05 describes the religious support mission of the

chaplain and his assistant thusly:

> The mission of the UMT is to provide and perform religious support to soldiers,
> families, and authorized civilians as directed by the commander. Chaplains serve
> as personal staff officers to commanders at all levels of the command providing
> essential information on troop and unit morale, quality of life matters, free
> exercise of religion issues, ethical decision-making, and the impact of religion on
> the operation.[57]

Just a few lines later, the religious support activities of the chaplain are defined in part as,

"Taking part in command activities; visiting soldiers; calling on families; activities and

unit 'ministry of presence'; individual and group pastoral counseling; and similar pastoral

activities."[58] Such descriptions of the chaplain's mission and activities clearly assume

both his significant place within the larger team as well as the importance of his ministry

of presence. Even a casual reading of FM 1-05—or any other chaplain-related DOD

publication for that matter—demonstrates plainly that presence ministry and teamwork

go hand in hand within the military chaplaincy. In fact, one seemingly precipitates the

other. For instance, if the chaplain desires to be a team player, then his holistic presence

is necessary. Conversely, if the chaplain maintains a viable and intentional ministry of

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[56] Brown, 23.

[57] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Religious Support*, Field
Manual (FM) 1-05, 1-5.

[58] Ibid.

presence within his unit, then he is likely to be considered an important member of the team. This latter point is critical in the context of military chaplaincy; therefore, it deserves further discussion.

Teamwork is imperative to any organization, but nowhere is this truer than in the military. Consequently, the chaplain's crucial role as team-builder/player cannot be overstated. His ministry is often legitimized in the eyes of commanders, staff officers, and other service members based upon his ability to integrate effectively into the team. The chaplain who is genuinely and holistically present stands a good chance of gaining the respect and admiration of those whom he serves, thereby securing his position as a viable member of the larger team. Such would ideally result in a fruitful harvest consequent to his pastoral labors. On the other hand, those chaplains who "spend most of their time sitting around an office drinking coffee and waiting for people to come to them" have the opposite effect on their units.[59] Rather than promoting teamwork, absentee chaplains promulgate dissention and foster low unit morale.[60] Again, there is a synergy between teamwork and presence ministry that cannot be ignored. Indeed, it should be affirmed.

A final strength of the ministry of presence is its inherently self-sacrificial character. Though this positive attribute is quite obvious and requires little discussion, it is nonetheless important to mention. Presence ministry calls upon the chaplain to attend to his people no matter their circumstances.[61] Whether in relative safety or in the throes

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[59] Holdridge, 116.

[60] See Brown's earlier comments.

[61] Bohlman, 39; Holdridge, 116; Paget and McCormack, 27-28.

of combat, troops have spiritual, emotional, and physical needs that must be met. The ministry of presence places the chaplain in context to meet these needs without regard to selfish desire. To be sure, the service-oriented aspect of the working definition of presence ministry reflects this quite clearly. Chaplains exist not to serve themselves or their own needs but to serve the needs of others. Inasmuch as presence ministry encourages sacrifice of self in order to minister to others, it should be held in high esteem.

Weaknesses of the Ministry of Presence

Notwithstanding the above articulated strengths, however, presence ministry is burdened with some rather significant weaknesses. Four of these will be discussed in this section. The first is its overtly chaplain-centric quality. Even a rudimentary understanding of presence ministry reveals that the foundation or starting point of the model is clearly the physical, emotional, and spiritual presence of the chaplain. It is *his* presence that catalyzes the ministerial event or chain of events. In order for hope, sanctity, or service to be initiated, the chaplain must first establish his presence among the troops. He becomes, in effect, the cornerstone of the ministerial endeavor.

Although this may sound innocuous enough upon initial examination, further consideration exposes a subtle danger in such perspective. Establishing any ministerial paradigm squarely upon the shoulders of a human agent (i.e., the chaplain) encourages the sins of pride, narcissism, and sanctimony. As optimistic as one might be regarding human nature and/or the ability of God's minister to thwart such self-centered temptations, the fact remains that in a fallen world populated by fallen agents, sin is a constant and foreboding threat. The imminent scholar and theologian Millard J. Erickson

recognizes the ability of pride to trap even the most educated theologians and devoted

men of God. In the conclusion of his popular systematic theology, Erickson poignantly

warns,

> There are certain dangers associated with the study of theology. There are certain theological diseases to which one is exposed and which one may contract as a result of this endeavor. . . . One of the most common and most serious is the sin of pride. When we have acquired a considerable sophistication in matters of theology, there is a danger that we will regard that knowledge as something of a badge of virtue, something that sets us apart as superior to others. We may use that knowledge, and particularly the jargon we have acquired, to intimidate others who are less informed. We may take advantage of our superior skills, becoming intellectual bullies.[62]

Erickson's indicting words stand as a testament to the dangers of human nature. Their

application in the present case is clear. As ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

chaplains must be wary of following the aforementioned way of pride, narcissism, and/or

sanctimony. This is difficult to avoid, even for the most self-effacing practitioner.

However, if a certain focus or "limelight" is lavished upon the chaplain—as is the case in

the presence-ministry model—then the task becomes ever more daunting.

  More importantly, the chaplain-centric character of the ministry of presence does

not square theologically with the theocentric and other-centric expectations of Scripture.

Biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 6:5, Psalm 118:8, and Matthew 22:37-38 clearly

admonish believers unto a theocentric worldview. The people of God are not to focus on

themselves or their wants and desires; rather, they are to give principal spiritual attention

to God. Beyond this, believers are to concentrate on the needs of others (Matt. 22:39;

Luke 10:27b, 30-37; Lev. 19:18; et al.). Nowhere in the New Testament are certain

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[62] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 1251.

believers identified as holier than others and, thus, somehow hierarchically superior.[63]

Likewise, believers are not afforded fundamental preeminence over unbelievers

anywhere in Scripture. To the contrary, passages such as Acts 9:13, 32, 41 and 1

Corinthians 10:26 demonstrate an ideology of egalitarianism among believers as well as

between believers and unbelievers.[64] What is more, Genesis 1:26-28 plainly articulates

the *imago dei* possessed by all mankind as part of God's special creation. Though many

theologians argue that this image was in some ways "lost" during the Fall of Man and,

thus, can only be restored through redemption in Christ,[65] most accept some persistence

of the image of God in every man, whether in a state of belief or unbelief. Thus, to

assume any manner of egocentrism in one's practical theology is to operate on the

periphery of biblical revelation.

Furthermore, when dealing with others, God's people are directed to do so from a

perspective of humility and deference. Arguably the quintessential verse in the New

Testament regarding humility is Philippians 2:3. There Paul writes, "Do nothing from

rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" (ESV).

The Greek word translated "humility" in 2:3 is *tapeinophrosynē*, which literally means

humility, modesty, or lowliness.[66] When used by first-century scholars such as Epictetus,

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[63] R. Eduard Schweizer, "Ministry in the Early Church," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 4, ed. David Noel Frredman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 837.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 10.

[66] Robert L. Thomas, "ταπεινοφροσύνη," *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

the word also connoted a "petty disposition" or "pusillanimity."[67] In this verse, Paul's

brand of humility is juxtaposed with the rivalry that motivated the selfishly ambitious

preachers in 1:17.[68] Here it opposes rivalry and clearly denotes an attitude of considering

others to be better than oneself and deferring to others without selfish regard.[69] Homer

A. Kent conveys Paul's message in 2:3 succinctly when he asserts, "What Paul means is

that our consideration for others must precede concern for ourselves."[70]

In fact, *tapeinophrosynē* is used to describe the humility Christ demonstrated on

the cross only a few verses later in 2:8.[71] As such, Paul's message is unambiguous. The

standard of humility set by Christ in his self-sacrifice on Calvary is the same humility

believers are to show in their relationships with others.[72] This in no wise presupposes

that believers are to disregard completely their personal concerns or needs.[73] However, it

does establish a relational precedence that clearly places others above self. This manner

of humility is taken up again by Paul in Colossians 3:12 and is a principal focus of his

defense before the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:19.

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[67] Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 1153.

[68] Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 94.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Philippians*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gabelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 122.

[71] Melick, 94.

[72] Ibid., 95.

[73] Ibid., 94; Kent, 122.

Clearly, then, there is an other-centric mandate evident in the New Testament. Founded upon a theocentric worldview (see Matt. 22:37-40, Deut. 6:5, et al.), this mandate stands as a veritable directive for the minister of the Gospel. On a hierarchy of concern, self takes a decidedly third-place position below God and others. The problem with the ministry of presence is that it risks shuffling this hierarchy. Although few chaplains would in theory or in practice place themselves above God, there is a patent danger that this could occur in regard to others. As Erickson warns (above), it is far too easy to fall into the trap of spiritual arrogance and self-centeredness. The danger is, of course, multiplied when one's paradigm for practical theology is founded upon a partially egocentric base. For this reason, then, the ministry of presence is somewhat suspect.

Another weakness inherent in the presence-ministry model is its potential for misapplication. Because emphasis is so patently placed upon presence, and because of the ambiguity surrounding the definition of it, there is a real risk that some may assume presence ministry is merely "being there."[74] That is to say, there is a conceivable danger that chaplains may assume their ministry is simply one of "hanging out" or "loitering with intent."[75] Tupy recognized this potential problem and dedicated an entire article in the *Military Chaplains' Review* to the subject. The term "presence" is simply too easy to equate with physical attendance, and, as Tupy intimates in his article, this is a mistake many chaplains frequently make.[76]

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[74] Tupy, 1.

[75] Paget and McCormack, 27.

[76] Tupy, 1.

A case in point is found in the article by Holdridge, which is quoted earlier in this work. Although Holdridge ultimately favors a presence-as-hope definition, he nonetheless begins his exposition on the ministry of presence by committing this self-same *faux pas*. In his initial description of the ministry of presence, he states rather sophomorically, "This is chaplain's lingo for being out and about with soldiers."[77] Admittedly, Holdridge's concept of ministry goes well beyond merely "hanging out," as the remainder of the article makes clear. Nonetheless, his starting point for the ministerial endeavor is distinctly a one-dimensional, unsophisticated understanding of presence. Similar misunderstandings no doubt inhabit much of the military chaplain corps, and it is partially for this reason that the label "ministry of *presence*" is appraised somewhat negatively in the present work.

A third weakness of presence ministry is its marginalization of the evangelistic mandate. Even the novice student of theology is keenly aware of the call upon every believer to spread the Gospel message to unreached peoples (Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8), to aid the Holy Spirit in the disciple-making process (Matt. 28:19), and to teach new converts obedience to the commands of Christ (Matt. 28:20).[78] Consequently, the military chaplain—as a leader of God's people—should make personal evangelism and evangelism education one of his main objectives. Unfortunately, the presence-ministry model makes little mention of evangelism. Though one might argue that the chaplain's evangelistic task is included as part of his spiritual guidance and mentoring functions in the presence-as-service definition (see Chapter 2), this connection is certainly not well-

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[77] Holdridge, 116.

[78] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 432.

articulated. Indeed, the topic of evangelism is virtually absent in discussions of the

ministry of presence in both popular and scholarly literature.

This fact might seem quite curious considering the centrality of evangelism in the

Gospels and Acts as well as throughout the Pauline corpus. Yet, perceptive students of

the military chaplaincy—as well as other types of chaplaincy, for that matter—are

sensitive to the realities of pluralism within the U.S. Armed Forces. Regulatory manuals

such as Army Regulation (AR) 165-1 make clear that pluralism is one of the pillars upon

which the chaplaincy rests.[79] Consequently, various DOD Major Command (MACOMS)

have been quick to issue general orders curbing the practice of an assertive, public form

of evangelism known as proselytizing. For example, General Order Number 1B (GO-

1B), an official military order issued by United States Central Command, lists

unequivocally among its prohibited activities, "Proselytizing of any religion, faith or

practice."[80] Since evangelism is often erroneously equated with proselytizing, both have

become veritable "four-letter words" within military contexts. As such, the topic of

evangelism is most likely avoided in discussions of presence ministry in tacit deference

to pluralistic ideologies.

Even so, the devoted, evangelical Christian chaplain should be patently

unsatisfied with this logic. Although open proselyting among the troop population is

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[79] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*, Army Regulation (AR) 165-1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 1, 11, 17-18. Pluralism, of course, is the recognition that all faith groups have equal place within the military and, therefore, none should be shown preference.

[80] U.S. Department of Defense, United States Central Command, *Prohibited Activities for U.S. Department of Defense Personnel Present within the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR)*, General Order Number 1B (GO-1B) (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Central Command, 2006), 4.

indeed forbidden in the military, his overarching ministerial paradigm must nonetheless make allowances for other, less-invasive forms of personal evangelism. The pluralistic environment of the military admittedly requires some concessions on the part of the chaplain; however, these concessions should never result in full or substantial omission of the evangelistic mandate. To do so is to commit theological compromise of the most egregious sort. That the ministry of presence seemingly gives only a distant second or third place to the evangelistic mandate is unfortunate and, thus, causes one to wonder about its overall efficacy as a guiding paradigm for military chaplains, especially those of a more evangelical bent.

Finally, and most importantly, the ministry of presence is to be criticized for its insufficient acknowledgement of biblical servanthood. Around every narrative corner in the New Testament, believers are exhorted unto service to God and their fellowman. To be sure, Jesus made servanthood—in both word and deed—*the* central aspect of his ministry (c.f., Matt. 20:26-28, Mark 10:43-45), even going so far as to die for the sins of mankind upon the cross at Calvary. In light of this, it would seem only appropriate that any ministerial paradigm for military chaplaincy have a similar focus. Yet, this is not the case with the ministry of presence. As noted earlier, presence ministry yields priority to the holistic presence of the chaplain and only secondarily recognizes the place of service. Considering the importance of servanthood in the New Testament, this is quite offensive to more evangelical sensibilities.

Furthermore, biblico-theological support for presence ministry is tangential at best. In fact, nowhere does the Bible explicitly articulate a doctrine of presence as it relates to a priest, minister, or other servant of God. As discussed earlier, some such as

Bohlman have attempted to use Jesus' presence with his disciples in such places as Luke

24:13-35 as an object lesson in support of presence ministry.[81] Still others like Peyton

have proffered the leaping of John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb upon encountering

the expectant virgin Mary as evidentiary in the case of presence (Luke 1:39-42).[82] The

idea even persists that the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence within the minister/chaplain

somehow manifests the presence of God through the medium of presence ministry.[83]

Admittedly, these arguments do—in some decidedly indirect ways—give credence to the

ideology of presence. Nevertheless, they fall far short of developing a full-scale doctrine.

To be sure, neither Christ nor any of the New Testament authors took the time to

expound unequivocally upon the notion of presence ministry. Moreover, the fact that

most biblical evidence for presence ministry comes from the life of Christ or from the

ministry of the Holy Spirit is noteworthy. Although such support can rightly be utilized

to develop a doctrine of divine or indwelling presence, it does little to bolster "third-

party" presence in the case of the minister, priest, or chaplain.[84] Finally, to link

manifestations of God's presence with ministerial presence and indwelling—even in the

slightest degree—is to attempt to compartmentalize or otherwise limit an omnipotent and

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[81] Bohlman, 39-41.

[82] Peyton, 10.

[83] Avery, 350-353.

[84] As noted near the conclusion of Chapter 2, there is little support for the doctrine of ministerial presence within the pages of Scripture. Corroboration is found largely in object lessons and loose metaphors. If more overt support for this notion were extant, greater pains would have been taken in this thesis to articulate it. In its absence, however, there is little to proffer other than the above criticisms. It is not the purpose herein to generate straw-man arguments; however, considering the dearth of biblical reference to ministerial presence, this thesis cannot rightly be accused of such academic indiscretion.

omnipresent Being. Such is not only illogical, but it also finds absolutely no support in Scripture. God requires no physical presence of man in order to manifest His divine presence. Genesis 1:1, Exodus 3:1-22, and the Incarnation demonstrate the veracity of this claim.

On the other hand, there is distinct biblical support for a doctrine or theology of servanthood. The Gospels, Pauline writings, and non-Pauline writings all develop this ideology at length. As a matter of fact, biblical servanthood is such an essential and proliferate doctrine in the New Testament that it deserves much greater exposition. The next section will therefore seek to articulate a biblical theology of servanthood. This will be used, then, to further evaluate the ministry of presence.

Toward a Biblical Theology of Servanthood

Centrality of Love and Its Relationship to Servanthood

There is little doubt about the centrality of love in the New Testament. When asked by the Pharisees which of the commandments in the Mosaic Law is the greatest, Jesus famously replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39, ESV; cf. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Jesus certainly left little doubt as to the foundational role love should play in the relationship of the believer to God and to his fellowman. The Apostle Paul continued this focus on love in his celebrated discourse in 1 Corinthians 13, ending the chapter by calling love the greatest of all Christian virtues. Love is, of course, a dominant theme elsewhere in the epistles of Paul (Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5:13, 22; 2 Cor. 8:8;

Phil. 1:9) as well as in the writings of Peter (1 Pet. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:7), John (John 3:16, 5:42;

1 John 3:17-18; 3 John 5-6), and Luke (Luke 10:27).[85] In each case, love is not portrayed

as an ancillary or secondary concern. To the contrary, it is envisaged as that upon which

all else hinges.

It must be noted, however, that there are two Greek words translated "love" in the

English New Testament. The first of these is *phileō* (and its derivations), which

commonly signifies "tender affection."[86] This type of love is intently focused on the

quality of its object and esteems the object above all other things.[87] It is the type of

affection one might have for a friend or family member,[88] hence it is sometimes referred

to as "brotherly love." Examples of this usage include John 11:36, Romans 12:10, 1

Thessalonians 4:9, Hebrews 13:1, and 1 Peter 1:22.

On the other hand, the New Testament uses the Greek *agapeō* (and its

derivations) to express love as well. This manner of love is different from *phileō* in that

it does not focus intently on the quality of its object.[89] In other words, *agapeō* is a

deliberate and intentional love that manifests unconditionally and apart from matters of

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[85] Martin H. Manser, "Love, nature of," *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

[86] W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr, "Love," *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 382.

[87] Ibid.

[88] David Lanier, "Love," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1054.

[89] Vine, Unger, and White, 382.

character or quality.[90] As Leon Morris has noted, "It is a love lavished on others without

a thought whether they are worthy or not."[91] The New Testament writers often use

agapeō when referring to the love God has for mankind (e.g., John 3:16; Rom. 5:8) or the

love He expects man to have for Him (e.g., Matt. 22:37) and for others (e.g., Rom. 15:2;

1 John 4:11; Matt. 22:39).

Regardless of which Greek word is utilized, however, there is more often than not

an implied activity associated with love in the New Testament. That is to say, love is not

passive or simply emotive in nature.[92] To the contrary, the love spoken of in the New

Testament—whether translated from *phileō* or *agapeō*—is want of or descriptive of a

response directed from the principal toward the object(s). For instance, in John 3:16 and

Romans 5:8, Jesus' love (Gk. *ēgapēsen* and *agapēn*, respectively) for man was not simply

a feeling; rather, it manifested in the act of sacrificial atonement on the cross. Likewise,

the love referred to in Romans 12:10 (Gk. *philadelphia* and *philostorgoi*) does not end in

mere emotion. To the contrary, this manner of love is to result in service unto the Lord,

meeting the physical needs of others, and hospitality (cf. Rom. 12:11-13). Of course,

examples such as this could go on *ad nauseum*. However, the point is clear: love in the

New Testament is not divorced from action. Where one finds love, one is also apt to find

some sort of activity—whether descriptive or prescriptive—associated with it.

This link between love and action is made unambiguous in the Old Testament as

well. In the first place, man is frequently called upon to demonstrate his love for God

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 177.

[92] Vine, Unger, and White, 382.

through obedience and service.[93] This love of obeisance is typically translated from the

Hebrew *'āhē*☐.[94] Passages such as Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 30:16-20; Joshua 22:5; and

Psalm 119:113, 119, 127 are representative.[95] Furthermore, God's love toward man—

translated variously from the Hebrew words *'āhē*☐ and ☐*ese*☐[96]—is also often revealed

through divine activity. For instance, in Deuteronomy 4:37-38, the love (Heb. *'āhē*☐) of

God resulted not merely in empty sentiment toward His people; instead, it manifested in

deliverance from Egypt. Likewise, the love (Heb. ☐*ese*☐) represented in Jeremiah 32:18

is confirmed by God via reward for His people and in His "mighty deeds" (cf. Jer. 32:18-

19). Like in the New Testament, then, action naturally follows emotion in the

dispensation of pre-Christian love. Theologian Will Metzger has metaphorically and

appropriately described benevolent action as "springing from the Bible's definition of

love."[97] Few statements capture the true essence of biblical love better.

     Nevertheless, to speak of "benevolent action" or "action-oriented love" is to be

somewhat abstruse. There is a necessity to refine further what exactly is meant by

"action" in the case of biblical love. Fortunately, one does not have to search long within

the pages of Scripture to find the answer. Galatians 5:13 reads, "For you were called to

freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but

through love serve one another" (ESV, emphasis added). In this verse, Paul establishes a

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[93] Richards, "Love," 420.

[94] Ibid., 418.

[95] Ibid., 420.

[96] Ibid., 418-419.

[97] Metzger, 162.

clear equivalence between biblical love and service to others. The latter part of the verse could alternately be read, "serve one another through love." In such case, the imperative "serve one another" (Gk. *douleuete allēlois*) is modified by the participial phrase "through love" (Gk. *dia tēs agapēs*), thereby making the prescription for execution clear. Love is the manner through which one is commanded to serve.

A similar equivalence can be found in Hebrews 6:10. The writer's words are poignant: "For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and *the love that you have shown* for his name *in serving* the saints, as you still do" (ESV, emphasis added). There is little doubt in the message being conveyed. The writer of Hebrews is commending his readers for demonstrating their love in the form of service to others. The syntactical string of subject (Gk. *tēs agapēs*, trans. "the love"), indicative verb (Gk. *enedeixasthe*, trans. "you have shown"), and participle (Gk. *diakonēsantes*, trans. "in serving") is decisive in this case. The love shown by these readers was done so through service to the saints. A clearer picture of the relationship between love and service could not be painted.

Another example of this connection between love and service is Luke 16:13, where Luke recorded the words of Christ in the famous Parable of the Dishonest Manager. Christ proclaimed, "No servant can *serve* two masters, for either he will hate the one and *love* the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (ESV, emphasis added). The obvious implication in this statement is that the master who is loved is the one truly served, whereas the despised master is the one to whom only feigned or half-hearted service is given. Though the equivalence between love and Christian service is not as crisp in this verse, it is certainly assumed.

Unfortunately, love and service are directly equated few places in Scripture as they are above. However, there are countless passages in the Bible that encourage *modes* of service to God and to others which are plainly motivated by love. In 1 John 3:17-18, the believer is exhorted to provide for the needs of his fellowman. To do otherwise, states John, is to prove the absence of love in the believer's heart. In fact, John exhorts, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18, ESV). Also, as noted earlier, Romans 12:10-13 equates the good works of prayer, contribution to others, and hospitality with genuine love for one another. Even Christ himself weighed in on the matter of love and service. He boldly proclaimed that to love God means to keep His commands (John 14:15). Likewise, Christ used the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) as an application for his exhortation to "[love] your neighbor as yourself" in Luke 10:27b. In this parable, of course, the one who serves the injured man by tending to his needs is the one who demonstrates true love.

Indeed, the list of examples above could continue. Suffice it to say at this point, however, there is an evident relationship between biblical love and service expressed within the pages of Scripture. Along these lines, the venerable theologian W. Oscar Thompson has stated matter-of-factly, "Remember, love is action. It is doing. Love is meeting needs."[98] If one considers Thompson's statement along with the evidences presented above, and further measures these in light of Matthew 22:37-39, 1 Corinthians 13, et al.,[99] then it becomes apparent that some manner of centrality must be afforded to

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[98] W. Oscar Thompson, Jr., *Concentric Circles of Concern: Seven Stages for Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 157.

[99] These passages were used earlier in this section to demonstrate the centrality of love in the New Testament.

Christian service. That is to say, if love for God and others is central to the New and Old Testaments—a notion against which few would argue (cf. Lev. 19:18, Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:37-39)—and if service to God and to others is the natural byproduct of this love, then service must be central to Christian praxis as well. Admittedly, there are likely few who would contend fervidly with this assertion or its underlying logic. Nevertheless, what has been stated thus far is noticeably incomplete. The present section has only concentrated on the connection between biblical love and Christian service. Servanthood itself must still be dealt with in a more direct fashion. The next section purposes to undertake this task.

<div align="center">Servanthood in the Bible</div>

Servanthood in the New Testament

Ronald H. Sunderland has made an unflinching statement relative to servanthood in the New Testament. In regard to the early church, Sunderland boldly asserts, "There was . . . no drawing back from the notion of servanthood—it was claimed absolutely as a symbol of honor to be a 'slave of Christ'. . ."[100] Yet, no matter the apparent audaciousness of Sunderland's claim, even cursory examination of the New Testament proves its veracity. In his response to the arrogant requests of James and John to occupy places of authority in the new Kingdom, Jesus responded, "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served

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[100] Ronald H. Sunderland, "The Dignity of Servanthood in Pastoral Care," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 57, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 270.

but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45, ESV; cf. Luke

22:26-27; Matt. 20:26-28).[101] This passage, of course, functions as the veritable fulcrum

upon which New Testament servanthood rests. In fact, three extremely important aspects

of biblical servanthood are introduced in these verses, each of which demand elucidation.

First, Jesus stated, "But whoever would be great among you must be your

servant" (Mark 10:43b, ESV, emphasis added). The Greek word translated "servant" in

this verse is *diakonos*. Most often, this word and its cognates *diakonia* (trans. "ministry"

or "service") and *diakoneō* (trans. "to serve") speak of service to others—the meeting of

peoples' physical and spiritual needs (e.g., Luke 10:40; Acts 21:19; Rom. 12:7, 16:1; 2

Cor. 9:12; Eph. 4:12; Heb. 1:14). In fact, *diakonos*, *diakonia* and *diakoneō* are the Greek

words from which the church derives its titles or ecclesiastical offices of "minister" and

"deacon," both of which are envisaged as servants of the saints and of those who are in

need.[102] Indeed, the word *diakonos* was used often in the first century to refer to those

who performed the menial task of waiting on tables.[103] Clearly, then, the disciples (and,

consequently, all believers) were being called upon to subjugate their own selfish desires

and seek the good of others. The exhortation of Christ was plainly unto sacrificial

service. This, of course, runs counter to the flesh and to the first-century ideologies

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Grady C. Cothen, "The Servanthood of Jesus as a Role Model for the Laos," *Theological Educator* 31 (Spring 1985): 56; Roger Hazelton, "Ministry as Servanthood," *Christian Century*, April 24, 1963, 523.

[103] James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 170.

regarding authority.[104] As leaders in the fledgling church, the disciples should have been

expected to occupy positions of prestige and honor. In Christ's Kingdom, however,

leadership is defined paradoxically,[105] thus giving rise to a dispensation of governance

and activity opposed to that of the world.

Secondly, Christ went on to assert, ". . . and whoever would be first among you

must be *slave* to all" (Mark 10:44, ESV, emphasis added). In a clear incidence to

parallelism, Christ amplified what was just proclaimed in Mark 10:43b.[106] The former

declaration called upon believers to be servants (i.e., *diakonos*) of their fellowman and,

by extension, servants of God. In 10:44, however, believers are exhorted to be slaves.

The word translated "slave" in 10:44 is from the Greek *doulos*, which, though incorrectly

translated as "servant" by the King James, Geneva, and various other Bibles,[107] is most

appropriately conceived of as "one who is subservient to another."[108] When used in the

New Testament, *doulos* conveys a profound meaning. In ancient Grecian parlance,

doulos referred to "the lowest class of society" and even carried the connotation of

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[104] Walter W. Wessel, *Mark*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 720; Hazelton, 523.

[105] Wessel, 720.

[106] The renowned theologian E. W. Bullinger sees the parallelism and amplification in 10:43-44; however, he curiously supposes that said amplification results from the addendum "to all" at the end of 10:44. This is because Bullinger incorrectly translates *doulos* in 10:44 as "servant" instead of appropriately as "slave." A proper translation of *doulos* demonstrates the amplification *par excellence* and, thus, adds considerable credence and substance to Bullinger's argument. See E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 462.

[107] MacArthur, *Slave*, 15-18.

[108] James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

"degradation and abuse."[109] Whereas the first-century servant (i.e., *diakonos*) was a willful party in the transaction of service, the slave (i.e., *doulos*) was "owned by another and possessing no rights except those given by his or her master."[110] With such a strong slave motif inherent in the meaning of *doulos*, it is little wonder that this word is often used in reference to man's relationship with God (e.g., Rom. 6:22; 1 Pet. 2:16; Jas. 1:1). Admittedly, though, it is also frequently utilized to describe the believer's relationship with others, as in the case of Mark 10:44.

This stark contrast between *diakonos* and *doulos* in Mark 10:43-44, then, demonstrates the quality of servanthood to which Christ aspires. Servanthood is not merely serving (i.e., doing good deeds for) God and others; rather, it is about placing oneself in total subjugation to the will of God and the needs of one's fellowman. As stated earlier, this was totally contraindicative to the secular worldview of the first century. However, in the mind of Christ, it was a key characteristic of those who would follow after Him. To be a Christ follower in the first century and beyond meant to be a servant and, indeed, a slave to all.

Finally, Christ brought his admonishment of James and John to a conclusion when he stated, "For even the Son of Man came not *to be served* but *to serve*, and *to give his life* as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, ESV, emphasis added). The phrases "to be served" and "to serve" are both translated from derivations of *diakoneō* (see above discussion). As such, the servant motif is readily apparent and functions as an object

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[109] John C. Hutchison, "Servanthood: Jesus' Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (January-March 2009): 67.

[110] Brooks, 170; See also MacArthur, *Slave*, 16-17.

lesson for 10:43b.[111] That is to say, Jesus was calling on his disciples to follow his lead

and to serve out of a sense of humility and deference to others and to God, just as He was

doing.

At the same time, Jesus was bringing to light the slave motif (i.e., *doulos* in

10:44) when he described His ministry as the giving of "his life as a ransom for many"

(10:45b), an obvious reference to the cross.[112] Indeed, the slave motif in 10:45b is

informed by Jesus' actions later in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). There, in

a clear display of humanity, He asked the Father to "Remove the cup from me" (Mark

14:36b, ESV), signifying fear of His impending death upon the cross. Yet, in the next

sentence, Jesus exhibited His utter servitude and slave-like devotion to the will of God

when He proclaimed, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36c, ESV).

When this Gethsemane narrative is considered in the context of 10:45b, it is clear that

Jesus was presenting His life and ministry as an exemplar of what being a servant or

"slave to all" truly entails, namely, complete subjugation to the will and purposes of God.

Moreover, through this articulation of his own ministry, Jesus was highlighting

once again the countercultural character and paradoxical nature of His brand of

leadership and faith praxis. Whereas the greatest among men in the secular world are the

first or most prominent, in Christ's dispensation the first are the last and the last are the

first (Matt. 20:16). Stacy T. Rinehart has captured the essence of this passage well. He

writes, "He [Jesus] dramatically redefined the terms of greatness and pointed His

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[111] Narry F. Santos, "The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (October 1997): 458.

[112] Ibid.

disciples in another direction entirely. You can be leaders, He told them, but you must take the route of sacrifice, suffering, and service."[113]

In summary, then, servanthood in the New Testament is characterized by Christian service that seeks to meet physical and spiritual needs (i.e., *diakoneō*) while at the same time doing so from a position of lowliness and subservience (i.e., *doulos*) to both God and man. It is typified by the humble and contrite service believers offer to God and, consequently, to their fellowman. Furthermore, servanthood is the modeling of one's life after that of Jesus Christ, who submitted His entire will to that of the Father's (cf. Mark 10:45, 14:36). Indeed, He submitted even unto death upon the cross. At its most fundamental level, therefore, servanthood is subjugating one's volition to the "moral demand" implied and personified in the life of Christ.[114] Just as Christ gave His life as a ransom for many, so too is the believer called to give his life as a veritable sacrifice unto God and man.

Of course, this section would be remiss if it did not mention something about several other Greek words translated "servant" in the New Testament. Among these are *oikonomos* (cf. *oiketēs*), which refers to one who performs the duties of a household servant/slave and is oftentimes rendered "steward" in the New Testament (e.g., Luke 12:42; 1 Cor. 4:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10); *hupēretēs*, which derives from one who served aboard ship as a rower or ship's slave (John 18:36; Acts 13:5; 1 Cor. 4:1); *leitourgos*, which denotes a "public servant" and, particularly, one who served in the office of priest

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[113] Stacy T. Rinehart, *Upside Down: The Paradox of Servant Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS, 1998), 29.

[114] Sunderland, 271.

(Rom. 15:16);[115] and *latreuō*, which connotes service through worship and devotion to God (Matt. 4:10; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 8:5, 9:14).[116] In each case, these words allude to one who sacrificially places the needs of others above his own and/or who serves another's will without considerable regard for personal preference. In most cases, these words convey similar connotations of humble, self-effacing service as *diakonos* and *doulos* and, thus, add even greater credibility to the ideology of servanthood that pervades the New Testament.

Fortunately, for those who serve God and man in this self-sacrificial, service-oriented way, Christ has provided a promise of blessing. Of course, to serve merely out of want for blessing could in itself be motivated by selfish desire; nonetheless, it is important to note God's loyalty to those who become servants and "slaves to all" (Mark 10:45). In John 13:16-17, Jesus declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (ESV). The conditional phrase "if you do them" (Gk. *ean poiēte auta*) in 13:17 is key because it identifies the preconditions for blessing. That is, blessing is bestowed upon those who first do "these things," an obvious reference to the humble service of the Master in 13:1-16.[117] As the Master had

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[115] Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 450. For *leitourgos*, see also Richards, "Servant," 551-552. For *hupēretēs*, see also H. G. Liddell, "*Hupēreteō*," *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

[116] Richards, "Servant," 552.

[117] Colin G. Kruse, *John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 285. John 13:1-16 contains the famous narrative of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.

unpretentiously served His disciples in the menial task of foot washing, so too should

they be willing to serve others out of a contrite and self-effacing spirit.[118] Admittedly,

the particular blessing(s) is(are) not identified in 13:17; however, the point Christ was

making is quite clear. Service to God and to others is an obligation placed upon all

believers. Just as the Master had demonstrated servanthood through His own actions, so

the believer is expected to emulate. However, for those who submit to God with a

servant's heart, He has promised to lift them up and share with them His glory.[119]

Servanthood in the Old Testament

The Old Testament essentially offers only one word translated variously as

"servant" or "slave."[120] This is the Hebrew *'ebed*. Though *'ebed* certainly has many

nuanced connotations, its lexical root carries with it the idea of work or labor.[121] In the

most basic sense, then, the ancient Near Eastern servant or slave was one who labored for

God and for his fellowman. His faith was one of action, not mere mental assent.

Consequently, the ideology of servanthood in the Old Testament would seem to dovetail

well with that presented in the New Testament. In fact, the functional parallels between

servants/slaves in the Old and New Testaments are astounding. For instance, the slave

(i.e. *doulos*) of Mark 10:44 is quite similar to the slave (i.e., *'ebed*) encountered in

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[118] Ibid.

[119] David Young, "Is Servanthood Enough?" *Brethren Life and Thought* 43, no. 1-2 (1998): 35, 37.

[120] Manser, "Servanthood, in society."

[121] Robert Lennox, "The Servant of Yahweh in the Old Testament," *Theology Today* 15 (1958): 315.

Genesis 20:14 and Exodus 21:21. That is to say, the slave in both instances was considered to be the physical "property of his master," thus possessing no inherent will of his own.[122] Likewise, the servant (i.e., *diakonos*) of Mark 10:43b attends to the needs of others in much the same fashion as his counterpart (i.e., *'ebed*) in 1 Samuel 18:5 and 2 Kings 22:12.[123] Again, just as the servant (i.e., *leitourgos*) in Romans 15:16 serves the community in a priestly role,[124] so too does the servant (i.e., *'ebed*) in Joshua 9:23 perform public service in the Temple.[125] Although the list of examples could obviously continue, these suffice to demonstrate the obvious comparability of trans-testamental servants/slaves.

Moreover, like their first-century brethren, Old Testament saints were exhorted unto service to God and to their fellowman. In fact, the moniker "Servant of Yahweh" or the appellations "my [i.e., God's] servant" and "servant" are routinely applied to even the most celebrated of Old Testament figures. For instance, Moses, David, and Job are referred to as "my servant" six, twenty-one, and seven times, respectfully.[126] Again, Joshua, Abraham, David, and Moses, though venerated leaders of Israel, are all nonetheless described by the title "Servant of Yahweh" (e.g., see Josh. 24:29, Gen. 26:24,

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[122] Ibid. This is not to imply that slaves did not have free will. It is only meant to point out the fact that slaves had to subjugate themselves completely to their master.

[123] Ibid., 316.

[124] Duffield and Van Cleave, 450.

[125] Lennox, 316.

[126] J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 319.

1 Kings 8:66, and Deut. 34:5, respectively).[127] As in the New Testament, there is no

expectation that believers are in some wise exempted from the lifestyle of servanthood.

To the contrary, the Patriarchs were clearly envisaged as God's principal agents of

service.

Of course, one cannot discuss servanthood in the Old Testament without some

reference to the famous Servant Songs of Isaiah 38-55. Therein the Messianic figure is

predicted as a servant of all through his suffering for the sins of man (see Is. 52:13-15).

This metaphor of the "suffering servant" is made all-the-more poignant when one

considers that Isaiah also presented the Messiah as the divine King of creation and

Sovereign of the universe only a few chapters earlier (Is. 1-37).[128] Such a juxtaposition

of kingly and servile motifs once again demonstrates the paradoxical nature of biblical

service (see discussion on New Testament servanthood above). Though he is, in fact,

King, the Messiah nonetheless relates to mankind as a redemptive servant, suffering

vicariously for the transgressions of man.[129] This idea is unmistakably parallel to Mark

10:45 where Christ (the Messiah) stated that He came "to serve" and "to give his life as a

ransom for many." Again, the equivalencies between the testaments could not be

sharper.

In short, then, the Old and New Testaments would seem to proffer the same

message, namely, that service is the unequivocal burden of the people of God. To be a

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[127] Woudstra, Marten H, *The Book of Joshua*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 57.

[128] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1974), 52-53. See also Motyer, 37ff.

[129] Ibid.

believer in God means to serve Him and others selflessly and expectantly. There is no option in this regard. Even God Himself is presented as a servant of others. The onus on man, therefore, is unambiguous. From Genesis to Revelation, there is a veritable duty levied upon the believer, no matter his station within the family of God. Genuine faith equates to humble service.

Examples of Servanthood in the Bible

Naturally, any study such as this would be deficient without a more detailed and systematized inventory of the various examples of servanthood found throughout Scripture. If servanthood is such a prevalent theme in the Bible—as proposed herein—then its ubiquity should be readily apparent. At risk of being rote, this section will survey the many literal and metaphorical occurrences of servanthood language in the Old and New Testaments.[130] Admittedly, this is not an exhaustive review; nevertheless, it will clearly demonstrate the service-orientation inherent in God's Word.

Jesus Christ and the Gospels on Servanthood

A logical place to start in an endeavor such as this is in the Gospels where Jesus speaks of His own servanthood and commissions a lifestyle of servanthood for His followers. Again, though the below references are not exhaustive, they nevertheless represent an adequate snapshot of the Gospels on the issue of Christian service. Unless otherwise indicated, the below references are the words of Jesus Christ.[131] Also, brief

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[130] Manser, "Servanthood, in society."

[131] Appropriate Greek words will be translated throughout this section and distinguished from the English translation through use of brackets.

exposition will be provided when necessary for greater contextual illumination of the

passage and/or when interpretation of the passage is not *prima facie*.

> "It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant [*diakonos*], and whoever would be first among you must be your slave [*doulos*], even as the Son of Man came not to be served [*diakonethenai*] but to serve [*diakonesai*], and to give [*dounai*] his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26-28, ESV).

The interplay between *diakonos* and its derivatives (*diakonethenai* and

diakonesai) and *doulos* and its etymological cousin (*dounai*) is quite obvious in this

passage. What may be less evident to the untrained reader, however, are the allusions

being made in 20:28 to the suffering servant in Isaiah 53:10-12[132] and to the "kinsman-

redeemer" of the Book of Ruth.[133] Nevertheless, scholars have recognized these

connections and written on them quite extensively. The ideology of selfless service

infuses this passage and leaves little doubt as to the believer's commission unto

servanthood.

> "The greatest among you shall be your servant [*diakonos*]" (Matt. 23:11, ESV).

> "And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant [*diakonos*] of all'" (Mark 9:35, ESV).

> "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant [*diakonos*], and whoever would be first among you must be slave [*doulos*] of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served [*diakonethenai*] but to serve [*diakonesai*], and to give [*dounai*] his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45, ESV).[134]

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[132] D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 434.

[133] James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew*: *The Triumph of the King (Matthew 18-28)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 428-429.

[134] See discussion on Matt. 20:26-28 above.

"But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves [*diakonōn*]. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves [*diakonōn*]? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves [*diakonōn*]" (Luke 22:26-27, ESV).

"When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant [*doulos*] is not greater than his master, nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:12-16, ESV).

The implications of John 13:12-16 are certainly many; however, two messages are central in regard to the present thesis. In the first place, the object lesson provided by Jesus' washing of the feet of His disciples stands as an exemplar of Christian service. One cannot ignore the humility and selflessness intrinsic in Jesus' action. The call for believers to be likewise willing to aid their fellowman in acts of menial or otherwise self-sacrificing service is patent.[135] As Merrill Tenney aptly opines, "Jesus portrayed for them the true nature of Christian living: serving one another."[136]

Secondly, it is clearly implied in this passage that the relationship between God and the believer is informed via a master-slave dynamic. Similar to Mark 10:44 and Matthew 20:27 above, the Greek *doulos* is not employed randomly in John 13:16. The message of deferent, self-effacing, selfless, slavish service to God is undoubtedly intentional.[137] Indeed, Jesus' many parabolic references to the believer's role as *doulos*

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[135] Kruse, 285.

[136] Merrill C. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 138.

[137] MacArthur, *Slave*, 204.

elsewhere in the Gospels affirm this central message of 13:12-16 (Matt. 22:3; 24:45-46; 25:19-30; Luke 12:37, 43, 45-47; 14:22-23; John 15:20; et. al). In each case, it is the believer who decidedly kneels at the feet of a holy God and who is to give himself wholeheartedly unto service to the Almighty.

In the end, one cannot ignore the servant/slave motifs in the Gospels. Christ's call on the life of the believer sounds like a clarion. Faith in Christ is not marked by accolades or special privilege. To the contrary, giving oneself over to Christ entails a subjugation of human will and preference. God's purposes and will become the believer's purposes and will, and the result is a life of sacrifice and service.

Paul on Christian Servanthood

Indeed, any discussion of biblical doctrine in the New Testament necessitates an examination of the Pauline corpus. When this is concluded, similar results as above are discovered. Paul, like Christ, exhorted his readers unto self-sacrificial, Christian servanthood. Below is a non-exhaustive, appropriately annotated listing of passages from Paul's writings that speak to the issue at hand.

> "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me'" (Rom. 15:1-3, ESV).

In this passage, no Greek words translated "servant" or "slave" are utilized. Nevertheless, the message of servanthood clearly undergirds this admonition. Christ selflessly placed the needs and desires of others above his own by taking the reproaches

(i.e., insults) of man upon His shoulders (Rom 15:3).[138] Likewise, Christians are called

to think of others first and themselves only secondarily.

> "But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder,
> because of the grace given me by God to be a minister [*leitourgon*] of Christ Jesus
> to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of
> the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:15-16,
> ESV).

Although *leitourgon* is translated "minister" in this passage and earlier in Romans

13:6, it must be noted that in first-century Greek parlance, "the *leitourgeō* word group

speaks of community service."[139] In this sense, then, the "minister" in 15:16 is a servant

of the people. This, of course, is borne out clearly in the context of the passage, as the

"minister" in question is said to be in "priestly service of the gospel of God."

> "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant [*emauton edoulōsa*]
> to all, that I might win more of them" (1 Cor. 9:19, ESV).

Two extremely important points must be illuminated in this verse. First, the

Greek *emauton edoulōsa* is literally translated "I enslave myself," thus bringing to bear

the slave motif in Paul's writings (see discussions above).[140] Secondly, the parallelism

between the Greek phrase *pantōn pasin emauton edoulōsa* (trans. "I have made myself a

servant of all") and the similar phrase *pantōn doulos* (trans. "slave to all") in Mark 10:44

is striking.[141] Indeed, it would seem that Paul was declaring to the Corinthians his

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[138] F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 240-241.

[139] Richards, "Servant," 552.

[140] John F. MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1984), 211-212.

[141] Ibid., 212.

fulfillment of Christ's exhortation in Mark 10:44.   In the same way as Christ, then, Paul

was no doubt encouraging readers to follow his example.

> "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1 Cor. 10:24, ESV).[142]

> "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants [*doulous*] for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5, ESV).

> "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve [*douleuete*] one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:13-14, ESV).

> Like 1 Corinthians 9:19 above, 2 Corinthians 4:5 and Galatians 5:13-14 harken to

the slave motif with their usages of *doulous* and *douleuete*, respectively. What is more,

they both speak poignantly of self-sacrificial service to others, Galatians 5:13 even going

so far as to use the imperative form *douleuete*. Furthermore, Galatians 5:14 isolates and

repeats Christ's words in Matthew 22:39 (cf. Lev. 19:18). Thus, there is no doubting

Paul's message. To follow Christ means being willing to subsume selfish desire and

personal want below the needs of one's fellowman.

> "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant [*doulos*], being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:3-8, ESV).

> This famous passage veritably defines what it means to be a *doulos* (i.e.,

slave/servant). Paul characterized Christ's slave-like servanthood as philanthropic self-

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[142] See the exposition on Rom. 15:1-3 above.

effacement (2:7, Gk. *ekenōsen*) and humility (2:8, *etapeinōsen*) before God and man.[143]

Thus, in 2:3, Paul's exhortation to be humble and to count others greater than oneself is

carried along and given legitimacy by the example of Christ Himself. Just as Christ

suffered for others—even unto death—so, too, should Christians suffer for and serve their

fellowman.[144]

> "I thank God whom I serve [*latreuō*], as did my ancestors, with a clear
> conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day" (2 Tim.
> 1:3, ESV).

Interestingly, the literal translation of *latreuō* is "I worship."[145] Nevertheless, the

ESV, NIV, and many other English translations render the verb "I serve" because the

latreuō word group specifically speaks to religious service or, more precisely, direct

ministerial service to God.[146] It is used in other places in the Pauline epistles such as

Romans 1:9, 25 and Philippians 3:3 where it is variously translated as derivatives of

"worship" and "serve." In all cases, it suggests complete and wholehearted service to

God—a worshipful attitude that expresses itself both in internal devotion and external

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[143] Melick, 103; Erickson, 751. Melick does not make this exact point; however, his exposition of 2:7 encouraged this interpretation.

[144] This idea of Christ humbling Himself and making Himself nothing is spoken of in terms of the Kenosis or Kenotic Theory. Kenotic Theory states that Christ emptied Himself of His divine attributes in order that He might take on human flesh, suffer, and die for the sins of man. In other words, Christ made Himself to be a servant that He might bear the burden of man's transgressions. Nevertheless, discussion of the Kenosis is beyond the scope of the present thesis. For more information on this important topic, see Melick, 101-107; Erickson, 751.

[145] Richards, "Servant," 552.

[146] Ibid.

action.[147] That is to say, it speaks not only to the servant's praxis, but also to his heart

attitude.

Of course, there are many other instances of commended servanthood in Paul's

writings. These few examples, however, demonstrate the importance of servanthood in

his theological grid. To be sure, Paul utilizes the slave motif (i.e., *doulos*) quite readily

throughout his epistles (even more than Christ did in the Gospels) to speak of the

believer's relationship to both God and man. Consequently, it is safe to say that Paul's

ideal servant was more than a willing participant in faith; he was one obliged to do God's

will. He was pressed into service for his Lord, as it were. At the same time, as Paul's

usage of the *latreuō* word group suggests (see above), this ideal servant was also one who

gloried in his service and performed it sacrificially unto God. He was a slave;

nevertheless, he rejoiced in his slavery and submitted his life willingly to his Lord and

Savior. Believers today are called to the same manner of service.

Non-Pauline Writings on Christian Servanthood

There is little doubt that the Gospel writers and Paul addressed the issue of

Christian servanthood more than any other authors in the New Testament. However, to

say these latter biblical writers embraced the topic less frequently in no wise renders their

offerings insignificant. Consequently, the present section will briefly explore instances in

the non-Pauline epistles and writings where the matter of Christian servanthood is

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[147] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, eds. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh, Scottland: T & T Clark, 1982), 124.

discussed. As before, biblical verses/passages will be listed below and commented upon as necessary.

> "I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered [*hupēretēsan*] to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:33-35, ESV).

This passage, of course, records Paul's famous defense before the Ephesian elders on his third missionary journey.[148] Paul strategically chose *hupēretēsan* to describe the hardworking service he performed for himself, for those who accompanied him on his journeys, and for the weak (i.e., the needy he encountered while traveling). As noted earlier, *hupēretēsan* (cf. *hupēretēs)* was often used in first-century Greek writings to refer to shipboard service, specifically service as a ship's rower,[149] a most unpleasant and laborious duty. Consequently, Paul's polemic is sharp. Although many were accusing him of other-than-selfless ministry service, Paul stood to proclaim the patently self-sacrificial and toilsome service he had endured in the name of Christ, a style of service concerned more with giving to others than receiving from them.

> "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve [*latreuein*] the living God" (Heb. 9:14, ESV).

The context of this verse is naturally quite important to its interpretation. In this particular section of Hebrews (9:11-14), the writer is speaking of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. His point in 9:14, then, is quite simple: because Christians have been purified from sin through the atonement, they are freed from their consciences

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[148] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1961), 105-106.

[149] Liddell, "*Hupēreteō*."

and mobilized for service and genuine worship of God.[150] As noted earlier in the

discussion of servanthood in the Pauline writings, the use of the *latreuō* word group in

this verse connotes wholehearted devotion to God and to the outworking of His will.

Arthur W. Pink has appropriately observed, "'To serve the living God,' [means to serve]

not simply in outward form but in sincerity and in truth. . . . Christians have both the right

and the liberty to 'serve God.'"[151] It is for the Christian to embrace this manner of

optimistic service and allow it to inculcate his life.

> "As each has received a gift, use it to serve [*diakonountes*] one another, as good
> stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pet. 4:10, ESV).

The use of *diakonountes* obviously speaks of service to others, as the internal

context of the verse clearly substantiates. The difficulty in this verse surrounds

identification of the "gift" to be used in this service. Many conservative scholars

interpret this to be the particular spiritual gift bestowed upon every believer.[152] Fleshing

out the nuances of this interpretation, however, is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

> "Jude, a servant [*doulos*] of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are
> called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ" (Jude 1, ESV).

> "The revelation of Jesus Chris, which God gave him to show to his servants
> [*doulois*] the things that must soon take palace. He made it known by sending his
> angel to his servant [*doulō*] John" (Rev. 1:1, ESV).

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[150] John F. MacArthur, *Hebrews*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary
(Chicago, IL: Moody, 1983), 230.

[151] Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004),
493.

[152] Alan M. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, The Tyndale New
Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979),
155-156.

The employment of *doulos* and its derivatives in Jude 1 and Revelation 1:1 is poignant. Both verses demonstrate how early Christians viewed themselves in light of Christ's ministry and teachings. Thus, Jude and John's self-proclamations serve as object lessons for all Christians.

> "The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants [*doulois*], the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great" (Rev. 11:18, ESV).

This verse is important because it essentially defines *doulois* (i.e., servants/slaves) for the New Testament reader. Some manner of equivalency is clearly implied among servants (*doulois*), prophets (i.e., Old Testament prophets), saints, those who fear God, and the "small and great." [153] Thus, one might logically conclude that to be a follower of God—whether pre- or post-*anno domini*—is to be a servant of God as well. There are some scholars, however, who believe the equivalency in 11:18 is only between servants and prophets, thus excluding the others listed above.[154] This interpretation, however, seems to ignore 19:5, wherein servants are explicitly paralleled with those who fear God and with the "small and great" as well as 2:20, 7:3, 19:2, and 22:3, wherein all believers are described as "servants."[155]

Obviously, the above listing is but a small rendering of the many non-Pauline exposés on Christian servanthood. Nevertheless, these examples act as a capstone and,

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[153] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, eds. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 616-617.

[154] Principal among these in conservative circles is Robert L. Thomas. See Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1995), 111-113.

[155] Beale, 617.

thus, demonstrate the ubiquity of servanthood throughout the New Testament. From the Gospels to the Pauline corpus through the non-Pauline epistles and into the Book of Revelation, there is a strident theme of Christian servanthood. Its presence cannot be denied or ignored. To the early Christian writers, there was a distinct expectation unto servanthood for those who proclaimed their love for God.

Old Testament Antecedents of New Testament Servanthood

Lest one forget that servanthood is not exclusively a New Testament theological doctrine, it is only fitting to offer some appropriate Old Testament examples.[156] However, since Old Testament servanthood is somewhat less complicated than New Testament servanthood due to its relative grammatico-lexical simplicity (see earlier discussion on *'ebed*), the necessity for lengthy commentary is reduced. Furthermore, since only the Hebrew word *'ebed* and its cognates are under consideration, instances of their occurrence within the texts below will be identified simply via italics.

> "The two angles came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, 'My lords, please turn aside to your *servant's* house and spend the night and wash your fee. Then you may rise up early and go on your way'" (Gen. 19:1-2a, ESV).

> "And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, instructing them, 'Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your *servant* Jacob, 'I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now''" (Gen. 32:3-4, ESV).

> "After the death of Moses the *servant* of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 'Moses my *servant* is dead'" (Josh. 1:1-2a, ESV).

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[156] Examples already discussed in the section entitled, "Servanthood in the Old Testament" are excluded from this listing in most cases.

"After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the *servant* of the Lord, died, being 110 years old" (Josh. 24:29, ESV).

"'Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his *servant*'" (1 Kings 8:56, ESV).

Much like Jude 1 and Revelation 1:1 above, these passages collectively demonstrate the self-awareness of the Old Testament "saints." They were not arrogant or haughty followers of God. To the contrary, they considered themselves servants of God (e.g., Josh. 1:1-2a, 24:29; 1 Kings 8:56) and of others (e.g., Gen. 19:1-2a, 32:3-4). Theirs was a spirit of humility, meekness, and self-effacement—the selfsame qualities observed in most New Testament believers. Thus, this concept of giving oneself over fully to the service of God was nothing new to the first-century Judeo-Christian world. In fact, it had been a trait of believers since the dawn of revelation.

"Behold my *servant*, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations" (Is. 42:1, ESV).

"And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his *servant*, to ring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—he says: 'It is too light a thing that you should be my *servant* to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the *servant* of rulers: 'Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you'" (Is. 49-5-7, ESV).

"Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his *servant*? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God" (Is. 50:10, ESV).

"Behold, my *servant* shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. . . . He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was

despised, and we esteemed him not. . . . but he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 52:13; 53:3, 5, ESV).

"Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my *servant*, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities" (Is. 53:11, ESV)

These excerpts, of course, come from the famous Servant Songs of Isaiah 38-55. Herein, the Messiah, who had previously been described as a mighty, conquering King (see Is. 1-37), is likened to a "suffering servant" who must endure certain death in order to atone for the transgressions and iniquities of His people (e.g., 52:13, 53:3, 5). As noted earlier, the countercultural tenor of this ideology is undeniable. In the secular world of the day—as today—the idea of genuine, self-sacrificial servanthood in the context of power, prestige, and prominence was unconscionable. In the mind of God, however, it is crucial, even being modeled by Him in the ministry and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. The foundational concepts of Mark 10:43-45; Matt. 20:26-28, 23:11; Luke 22:26-27; John 13:12-16; and others were nothing novel in the first century. In truth, they had been important facets of Judiasm for hundreds of years.

Distinguished twentieth-century theologian J. I. Packer once wrote, "Strain, or shock, or a lobotomy, can alter the character of a person, but nothing can alter the character of God. . . . His aims and principles of action remain consistent; he does not at any time act out of character."[157] Packer's assertion could not ring truer in the case of servanthood in the Bible. Although God refined this doctrine through Christ, Paul, and others in the New Testament, His immutability of character and "principles of action"

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[157] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 77, 79.

demand antecedency in the Old Testament. Just as the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15

harkens forward to the atonement and resurrection in Matthew 27-28,[158] or just as

Isaiah's use of *almah* and *Immanuel* in Isaiah 7:14 becomes the foundation stone for

Matthew 1:23,[159] so, too, are the seeds of servanthood sewn within the pages of the Old

Testament in anticipation of greater illumination during and after the incarnation. The

God of the New Testament is the same God of the Old Testament; thus, His ideal of

servanthood necessarily spans the whole of revelation.

<div align="center">Servanthood as a Principal Focus of Faith Practice</div>

Few doctrines are as clearly articulated from Genesis to Revelation as is the

doctrine of servanthood. From its foundations in love (Matt. 22:37-40) to its exhortation

in the teachings of Christ, Paul, John, Isaiah, Moses, and others, servanthood is a

veritable staple of biblical revelation. In terms of practical theology, then, there is no

denying the central role servanthood necessarily plays in the lives of God's people. If

one is to follow Christ and seek the will of God, then he must first love God and others

actively through service to the same. There is no justifiable sidestepping of this most

basic principle of Christian praxis. James, arguably the most notable New Testament

author on the subject of practical faith, certainly had the notion of servanthood on his

mind when he penned his famous words in James 2:18-20. Indeed, supposed faith in the

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[158] John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Salem, WI: Sheffield, 1975), 93.

[159] Edward E. Hindson, *Isaiah's Immanuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1979), 25-63.

absence of obsequious "acts of mercy and compassion" is tantamount to no faith at all.[160]

Christians are created to be servants and "slaves to all" (Mark 10:44). To reject this

concept is to rebuff one's spiritual heritage.

Conclusion – Servanthood vs. Presence

The ministry of presence has unquestionably guided the military chaplaincy

throughout U.S. history. Nevertheless, the forgoing sections and sub-sections of this

chapter ineludibly bring this practical ministry principle into question. On the one hand,

biblical support for presence ministry is dubious at best. Although Christ's holistic

presence with his disciples in Luke 24:13-15 has been used as an object lesson in

presence ministry by some,[161] and even supposing John's *in-utero* leap was in response to

the physical presence of Christ in the womb of Mary,[162] there is little direct support for

the practical theology of ministerial presence. The philosophical and theoretical bases for

this paradigm admittedly smack of soundness and commonsensicality. Nevertheless,

there is virtual silence on the matter within the pages of Scripture.

On the other hand, there is unequivocal support for the doctrine of servanthood

within both the Old and New Testaments. The believer cannot read and interpret

passages such as Mark 10:43-45 (cf. Matt. 20:26-28), Philippians 2:3-8, Jude 1,

Revelation 1:1, Joshua 24:29, and Isaiah 52-53 without recognizing his veritable spiritual

vassalage to both God and others. There is a call on the lives of God's people that goes

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[160] David P. Nystrom, *James*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 150.

[161] Bohlman, 39-41.

[162] Peyton, 10.

far beyond the mere notion of presence. They are to be a people of action—doers of the Word, not simply hearers (see James 1:22).

Christ beseeches His followers in the Sermon on the Mount to move past the conventional definitions of faith and to seek greater fulfillment in Him. Likewise today, it is insufficient for the Christian leader to practice fidelity to the *status quo* or to limit his ministry to normative paradigms of practical theology. Unfortunately, both vocal proponents and tacit adherents of the presence-ministry model have done just this. Although it is a seemingly sound and utilitarian ministry philosophy, its acceptance by many—if not most—chaplains is a matter of simple convention. Presence ministry has become so institutionalized within the military chaplaincy that it is largely accepted without rebuke. This is an unfortunate reality that plainly necessitates rectification.

It is one thing to call attention to a problem; however, it is quite another to offer viable alternatives and/or solutions. The remainder of this thesis, therefore, will explore one option for dealing with the aforementioned weaknesses in presence ministry. Known herein as the *ministry of service*, this new ministerial paradigm purposes to offer greater scriptural foundation for the practice of military chaplaincy—a foundation that rests upon the well-defined doctrine of servanthood discerned throughout the Bible.

CHAPTER 4

THE MINISTRY OF SERVICE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENCE MINISTRY

Introduction

In general, the ministry of service is characterized by three qualities or features.
First, it recognizes the practical necessity for a ministry paradigm to guide military
chaplains. Simply discarding the ministry of presence would do nothing to help further
the cause of the chaplaincy or the chaplains who serve in the military ministry. To the
contrary, such action would likely leave a practical theological void, one which would
invariably be filled by something even more philosophically based and less coincidental
with Scripture. Secondly, the ministry of service largely solves the practical weaknesses
inherent in presence ministry. Indeed, these solutions and the overall strengths of the
paradigm will be summarized at the conclusion of this chapter. Finally, and most
importantly, it acknowledges the centrality of servanthood within the whole of biblical
revelation and, therefore, endeavors to afford this doctrine its rightful place of
prominence. In this way, the ministry of service remedies an obvious theological flaw
intrinsic to presence ministry.

At the same time, service ministry[163] does not abandon the central elements of
presence ministry. More accurately, it seeks to maintain the elements of hope,

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[163] The terms "service ministry" and "ministry of service" are synonymous
throughout this thesis.

sanctification, and, of course, service that undergird the ministry of presence (see Chapter 2) as well as give some place to the notion of presence itself. The fundamental difference between the ministry of service and the ministry of presence is that the former begins from a foundation of servanthood, whereas the latter rests upon the physical, spiritual, and emotional presence of the chaplain. In the former, hope, sanctification, and presence flow out of service; in the latter, hope, sanctification, and service flow out of presence (see Figure 1 below). As is readily apparent, then, service ministry contains all of the same elements as presence ministry. The variance lies in the relative prominence of each as well as their order of conception. The present chapter purposes to describe the ministry of service based upon these elements and concomitantly demonstrate why this model is superior to that of the ministry of presence.
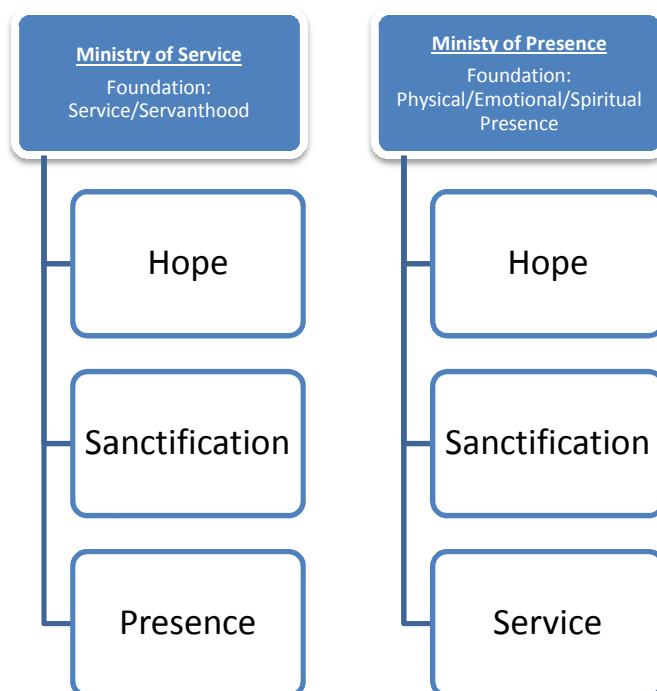

Figure 1: The Ministry of Service vs. the
Ministry of Presence.

One essential and exemplary aspect of service ministry is presently worth mentioning. Unlike its presence-ministry counterpart, the ministry of service possesses an overt declaration of its Great-Commission goal (see Figure 2 below). Within the service-ministry paradigm, service is not touted as a means to its own end; rather, it is but a starting point for God's ultimate mission of making disciples. This explicit focus on the evangelistic mandate is a central feature of the ministry of service and, thus, will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.
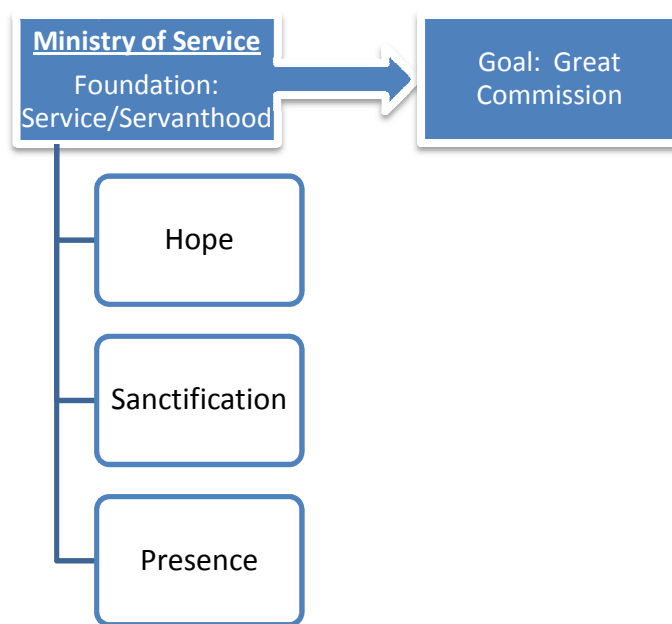

Figure 2: The Ministry of Service and the Great Commission

Statement of Limitation and Refinement of Purpose

It must be admitted at the outset of this chapter that the elements of hope and sanctification have not been systematically studied within this thesis. Only presence and service/servanthood have been examined in detail. As such, it would be a stretch of reason to dismiss out-of-hand alternative reformulations of the ministry of presence into the *ministry of hope* or the *ministry of sanctification*. These are certainly possibilities.

However, as established in the previous chapter, there is an undeniable focus in the Bible upon Christian service in the practice of faith. To be Christian assumes a lifestyle of servanthood. Consequently, any ministerial paradigm that does not assign primacy to servanthood should be suspect.

Moreover, from the discussion of presence ministry in Chapter 2, it is easily recognized that hope and sanctification are both products of the action or activity of "being present." Service, on the other hand, is conceptualized as an action in its own right. In other words, although service is founded upon the primary action of "being present" in a presence-ministry model, it nonetheless takes on a life of its own, thereby expanding and further catalyzing presence. Hope and sanctification exist as veritable ends in themselves; service is the means to a greater end. Consequently, it would seem inappropriate to found a ministry upon any one of two seemingly contingent elements (i.e., hope or sanctification) when the largely autonomous, multi-dimensional element of service is extant.

Still, the present thesis is not intended to debunk the ministry-of-hope or the ministry-of-sanctification options. Rather, the purpose herein is simply to offer one defensible alternative to the traditional presence-ministry model. In so doing, the ministry of service is proposed. The following sections seek to establish the framework of this alternative paradigm for the military chaplaincy.

Service as Mediator of Divine Hope

The endowment of hope is certainly one of God's main objectives for mankind and, specifically, for His people. The New Testament alone references the idea of hope

some 85 times.[164] In each case, "hope . . . fills us with eager expectation. . . . 'hope' is always the expectation of something good."[165] Yet, even though it is largely emotive in nature, hope is nonetheless firmly based upon the objective character of God and the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is to say, hope is experienced by God's people precisely because it has substantial basis in history and because it focuses attention on the Almighty.[166] Hope is not something the individual conjures on his own; rather, it is a conscious or semi-conscious response to objective truths and to the grace, mercy, and love of God. The writer of Hebrews made this point unequivocally. He exhorted, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23, ESV).

Unlike presence ministry, the ministry of service capitalizes on this idea of divinely-inspired hope as the sole source of man's blessings of peace and confidence in the future. Hope is not something contingent upon the presence of the chaplain or minister. To the contrary, it is the result of God's activity alone. Service is merely the medium through which the love of God and the truths of God's Word are brought to bear on the individual's life. The ministry of service does not unduly esteem itself or its role in the impartation of hope; rather, it places God squarely at the center of the ministry endeavor and rightly acknowledges Him as the ultimate source of man's "greater expectations" (see Figure 3 below).

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[164] Richards, "Hope," 344. "Hope" in the New Testament is translated from the Greek words *elpizō* (verb) and *elpis* (noun). Again, see Richards, "Hope," 344.
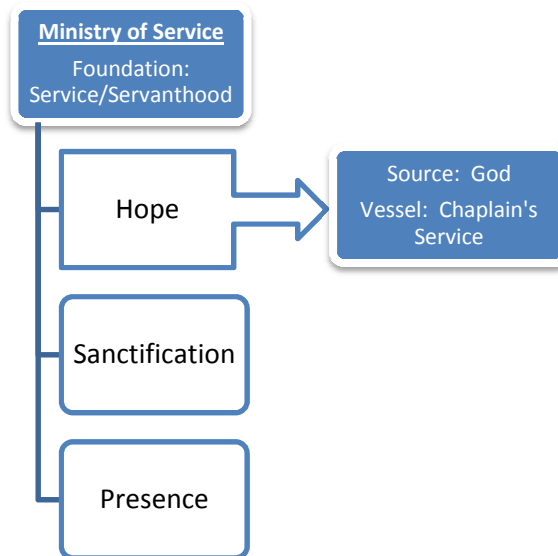
[165] Ibid., 343-344.

[166] Ibid., 343.

Figure 3: God as the Source of Hope.

Service as Mediator of Divine Sanctification

Whereas the ministry of presence proffers sanctifying influence based on the holistic presence of the chaplain,[167] service ministry places emphasis on the chaplain's activity or work (i.e., his service) as the vehicle of divine sanctification. In other words, God's presence is made known to the warrior or supplicant, not via the mere presence of the chaplain but, rather, as a result of his explicit demonstration of God's love, grace, and mercy through the medium of self-sacrificial service (see Figure 4 below). Through service the chaplain focuses attention on the attributes of God, not on his own spiritual attributes or, worse yet, upon favorable personality or physiological traits. Like Christ, the chaplain makes himself of no reputation in order to become a servant and "slave to all" (Phil. 2:7; Mark 10:44).

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[167] Recall that "presence as sanctification" was defined in Chapter 2 as the physical, emotional, and spiritual presence of God mediated through the presence of the chaplain. That is to say, the soldier is "sanctified" as a result of the actual presence of God being brought to bear on his life circumstance(s) through the presence of the chaplain.
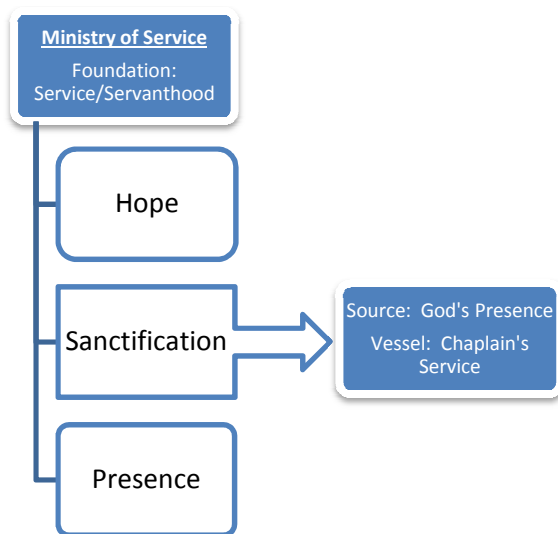
Figure 4: God as the Source of Sanctification

This accent on service vice presence is obviously preferable in the ministry endeavor primarily because it takes the proverbial "spotlight" off of the minister and places it rightly upon God. In addition, however, such emphasis is superior on account of its appeal to active faith. James famously opined, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). In this celebrated verse, James highlights the fact that true faith is active, working faith.[168] It is not passive or idle. To the contrary, genuine faith is marked by energy, vigor, and labor.

James B. Adamson has offered an apropos interpretation of 2:18. He decodes the verse thusly: "You claim to have faith: I have works. I can prove my faith by my works. But I defy you to prove to me the existence of your faith without works: For, of course, you cannot do it."[169] Faith and works are two complementary attributes of any Christ

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[168] Nystrom, 152.

[169] James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, eds. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 124.

follower.[170] To possess the former obliges the latter. One advantage of the service-

ministry paradigm is that it implicitly supports this central theological tenet of Christian

faith. In terms of the sanctifying influence of chaplain ministry, such appeal to active

faith decreases the chances of egocentricity on the part of the practitioner and, thus,

increases his likelihood of applying the principles of biblical servanthood.

Service as Presence

In the presence-ministry model, presence results in service; in the service-ministry

paradigm, service precipitates presence. The logic behind the latter is quite simple. As

the chaplain becomes a servant to his people, his ministry takes on an incarnational

character that could never be acquired through conventional presence alone. That is to

say, as the chaplain demonstrates the love of God through acts and attitudes of

servanthood, his ministerial authority among the troops assumes a greater reality and,

consequently, the effectiveness of his ministry increases (see Figure 5 below). As used

herein, "ministerial authority" does not refer to some manner of ecclesiastical jurisdiction

or leadership influence; rather, it speaks to the chaplain's standing as a member of the

larger team and as a person of credibility and trust. In short, "ministerial authority" is an

informal, qualitative measure of the chaplain's reputation among unit personnel and

peers. Naturally, it is the goal of any well-meaning, evangelical chaplain to be a viable

and respected member of the team—i.e., a person of good reputation whose Gospel

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[170] Douglas J. Moo, *James*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 106.

ministry thrives as a result of overall corporate acceptance and mutual esteem among

team members. Service ministry certainly has the potential to aid chaplains in reaching

this goal.[171]

Ministry of Service
Foundation:
Service/Servanthood

Hope

Sanctification

Presence

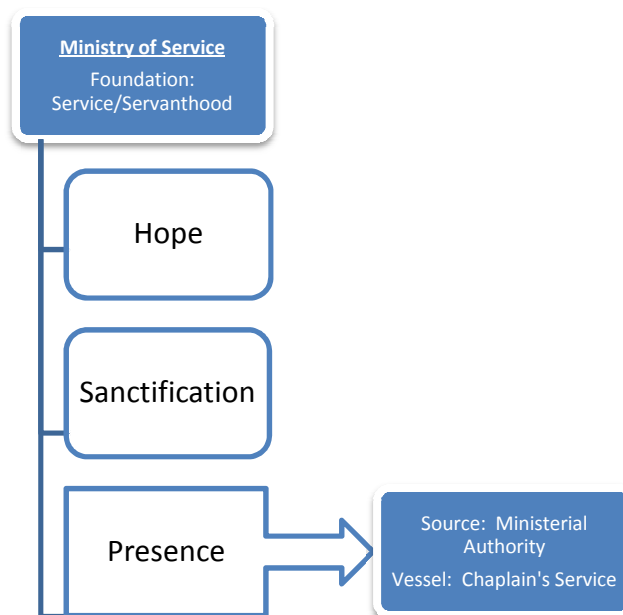Source: Ministerial Authority

Vessel: Chaplain's Service

Figure 5: Ministerial Authority as the Source
of Presence

It must be noted, however, that acquiring ministerial authority is an extremely

slippery slope. Chaplains must always maintain vigilance against the dangers of pride

and spiritual arrogance in the performance of their service. That is to say, the

achievement of ministerial authority harbors the same chaplain-centric potentiality as

does the ministry of presence for the unsuspecting chaplain. Ministerial authority run

amuck is nothing short of self-serving and narcissistic. Thus, in seeking ministerial

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[171] Tupy does not speak in terms of "ministerial authority"; however, he clearly sees the value of intentionality and action-orientation in the ministry endeavor and considers these qualities as vital to success. Indeed, he refers to chaplains who succeed in ministering to their troops in these ways as "powerful religious symbols." They are symbolically powerful, Tupy implies, precisely because they have fostered credibility, good rapport, and trust with those in their spiritual care. See Tupy, 4-5. See also Bohlman's discussion of servanthood in Bohlman, 46-48.

authority, the chaplain has a responsibility to keep his own ambitions in check and to seek first the will of God.

Service and Proclamation of the Gospel

On five different occasions in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, Jesus commissioned His disciples to evangelize the lost and spread the Good News to all peoples around the world (e.g., Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 25:45-49, John 20:21, Acts 1:8). What is more, Paul confirmed implementation of the evangelistic mandate in such places as Romans 1:8 and Colossians 1:6, and, of course, the Book of Acts is not want for examples of evangelism in action (e.g., Acts 5:42, 8:4).[172] Considering the New Testament *in toto*, then, it is clear that both Jesus and His first-century followers considered the Great Commission to be of principal import in the outworking of faith. Likewise, believers today should strive to make evangelism and Gospel proclamation a central part of their lives and ministries. Indeed, Matt. 28:19 and Acts 1:8 speak directly to the universal and worldwide emphasis of the evangelistic mandate.[173] If Christians are to fulfill completely the divine calling on their lives, then the Great Commission cannot be ignored. Few would argue counter to this notion.

Consequently, the ministry of service must endorse a Great-Commission emphasis. Although service is a central aspect of the Christian lifestyle, it is never to be accomplished in the absence of evangelism. To do so would be to flout distinct appeals and narrative examples to the contrary within the New Testament. Believers are to serve

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[172] Elmer Towns, *Core Christianity: What is Christianity All About?* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2007), 138-140.

[173] Boice, 648.

self-sacrificially, but this service is not the end-state goal. The goal of service is to bring

the truth of the Gospel to bear on the lives of others—to demonstrate the love, grace, and

mercy of Jesus Christ. In short, service is but a conduit for a loftier objective, namely,

conversion of lost souls. It is for this reason, then, that all aspects of the ministry of

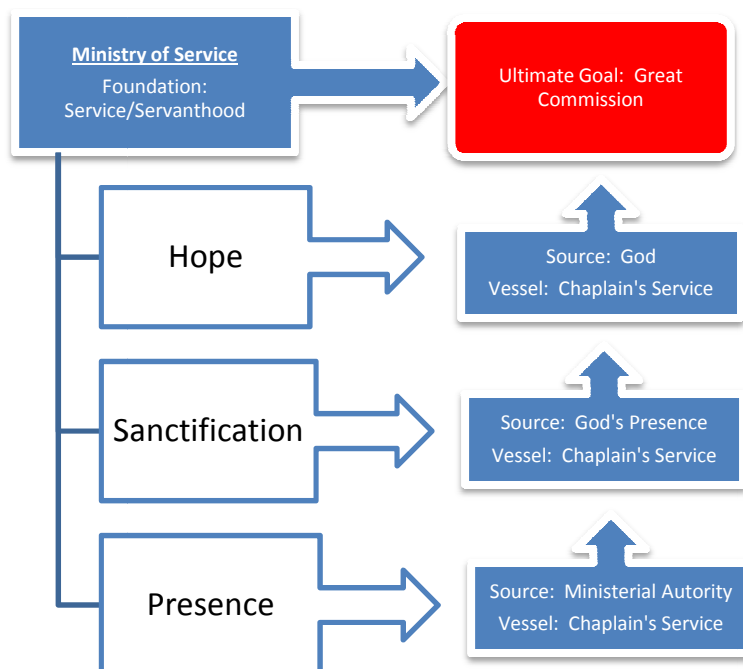service flow back to the Great Commission (see Figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Evangelism and the Ministry of Service

Elements of Service

Any student of practical theology will naturally want to know the elements of

service that support the service-ministry model. Conceptualizing service within the

chaplaincy, however, can be highly subjective and idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, the

categories of service proposed by Grooms seem to articulate adequately the types and

modes of service performed by a military chaplain.[174] Grooms envisages the chaplain's

service as essentially embracing the functional roles of mentor, first responder, and

educator-liturgist (see Figure 7 below). That is to say, the chaplain serves his people by

spiritually guiding and mentoring them, by coming alongside them amidst life's

exigencies, and by performing ceremonial, liturgical, and educational duties. Yet, as

demonstrated in the previous section, these modes of service must retain the ultimate goal

of encouraging people unto relationship with God. Along these lines, Grooms rightly

opines, "The overall objective is to bring spiritual depth to their [i.e., the soldiers'] lives.

For those persons, having someone such as a chaplain . . . can make a tremendous

difference in their lives."[175]

Of course, these functional roles of service to others are appropriately

accomplished from the foundation of love for one's fellowman as well as from the

principal foundation of love and service to God. To establish one's practical theology on

anything other than love would be, in the words of Paul the Apostle, to resound like "a

noisy gong or a clanging symbol" (1 Cor. 13:1, ESV). In other words, Christian service

is only properly so when it is grounded in something much more substantive, namely,

genuine love for God and others.[176]

Moreover, as maintained throughout this thesis, these functional roles of service

must be performed from a self-sacrificial posture. Any mode of service done to satisfy

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[174] See discussion of Grooms' service categories in the section entitled "Presence as Service" in Chapter 2.

[175] Grooms, 57.

[176] See discussion on biblical love in the section entitled "Centrality of Love and Its Relationship to Servanthood" in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

selfish ambition, secure material gain, or garner prestige is practically no service at all. True servants are those who place others above self and, thus, serve out of a pervasive attitude of humility, deference, and meekness.
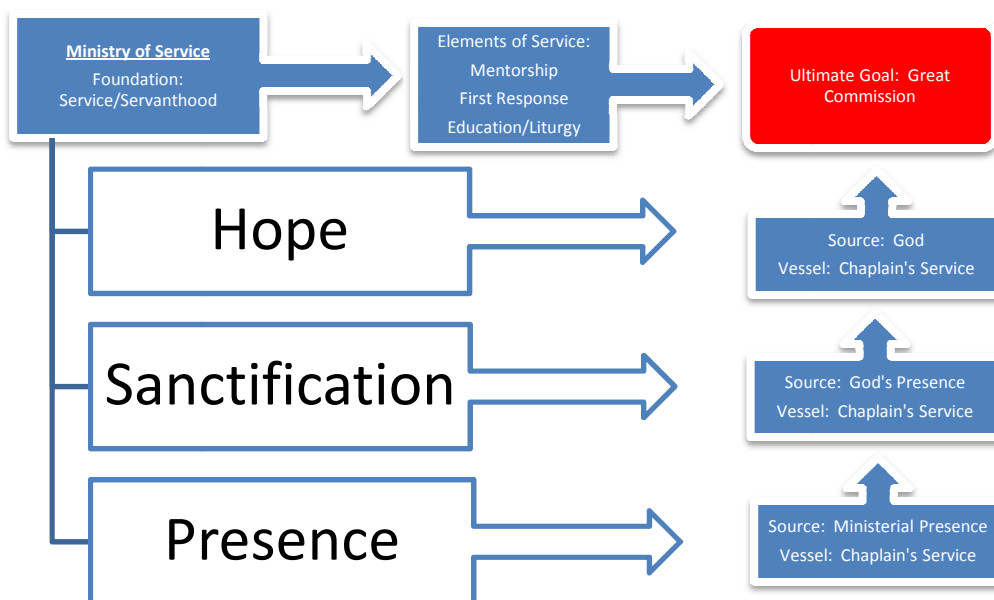
Figure 7: Ministry of Service with Elements of Service

Summary of Strengths and Conclusion

Although it would be rather presumptuous to conclude that the ministry of service is a flawless paradigm for the military chaplaincy, it nevertheless corrects many weaknesses of the presence-ministry model. Whereas the ministry of presence is chaplain-centric in its orientation, service ministry is other-centric and theocentric. The ministry of service is founded upon love for God and others as well as service to the same. That is to say, its focus is outward, not inward—selfless, not selfish. What is more, the weakness of potential misapplication inherent in the ministry of presence is largely mitigated using the service-ministry model. The danger of wrongly believing that "being there" is enough essentially vanishes when the central focus is placed upon active

service. Again, veritable exclusion of the evangelistic mandate in presence ministry is openly remedied via the ministry of service. Finally, while service inappropriately takes on a decidedly secondary role within presence ministry, servanthood is quite obviously the centerpiece of the ministry of service.

On this latter point, the service-ministry model provides a biblically defensible practical theology. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, servanthood is a central theme of the New Testament. Service to God and to one's fellowman was an explicit leitmotif of Jesus' ministry and teachings as well as those of other New Testament writers. Any model of ministry that does not grapple with the doctrine of servanthood and afford it some manner of ascendancy is, therefore, deficient. That the ministry of service does not err in this fashion but, rather, places servanthood at the crux of its practical theology is a definite boon for the paradigm. It is certainly difficult to argue with a model that ostensibly places others and God before self and seeks to eradicate the perils of self-centeredness. Of course, there will no doubt arise criticisms of the ministry-of-service model. This is expected and welcomed. Nevertheless, its superiority to the ministry of presence is, on the whole, quite clear. In fact, to argue for the ministry of presence over and above the ministry of service is not to contend with this thesis or its author; rather, it is to take to task Scripture itself and God who inspired it.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In her landmark book *The Sword of the Lord*, author and editor Doris L. Bergen

includes a touching quote from a young American Civil War soldier regarding spirituality

in combat. The young soldier proclaimed,

> There is no man, however brave he may be, who does not when the storm begins
> to rage fiercest around him; when he sees a friend on the right and another on the
> left, stricken down and quivering in the agonies of death; when he sees the serried
> ranks of his foe coming upon him undaunted and pouring their deadly fire out
> toward him, making the air quiver and hiss with the rapid movement of all
> manner of projectiles, from the keen sound of the little bullet that sings on its
> errand of destruction like the buzzing of a fly, to the bomb shell that goes by you
> like a thunder bolt, overcoming all obstacles; I say there is no man who when the
> first waves of such battle as this surge upon him, does not involuntarily and
> mentally appeal to God for protection.[177]

Of course, such is but one account among many in the course of American and world

history. Soldiers of all ages and nationalities have opined thusly when faced with the

ravages of war. It is into such fray that the military chaplain applies his craft. When

faced with bullets, bombshells, fear, and death, it is often only divine comfort that can

settle the restless spirit of man. Mediation of these comforts is the principal business of

God's military ministers—His chaplains.   The presence of a chaplain within the ranks

and on the battlefield can do much to calm the emotive pangs of war and bring comfort to

the oppressed. As Bohlman has asserted, "In the same way [as Jesus in Luke 24:27],

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[177] Quoted in Bergen, 12-13.

military chaplains have an opportunity to open up God's Word as a source of strength and confort to warriors. . . . as they offer a ministry of presence among military personnel."[178] Words such as Buhlman's seemingly ring true in the minds of most well-meaning chaplains. The commonsensicality, practicality, and parsimony of his statement leave little doubt as to the utility of presence in the military ministry endeavor. To be present is to offer fighting men and women what they need most, namely, comfort, hope, and a general sense of optimism for the future.

Even so, utilitarianism is not a proper tool for biblical exegesis or the formulation of a practical theology. Although presence ministry appears useful as a paradigm for the military chaplaincy, its biblical roots run shallow. As demonstrated in this paper, there is virtually no support for it within the pages of Scripture. Add to this the dangers of misapplication, chaplain-centricity, evangelistic exclusion, and servanthood marginalization and one has the recipe for a ministerial disaster. It is for these reasons, therefore, that a new practical theology is offered for the military chaplain, namely, the ministry of service. The ministry of service not only finds ample biblical support, but it also corrects the pragmatic and theological weaknesses identified in presence ministry.

At the same time, even though the present thesis has touted the ministry of service as far superior to the ministry of presence, it is realized that there are inherent limitations in this proposal. First and foremost is the reality that not all chaplains are evangelical Christians. As such, the hermeneutic and associated logic used to reach various conclusions in this paper may not resound with some readers. At the outset, therefore, it was admitted that the material contained herein might ostensibly apply to only

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[178] Bohlman, 40-41.

evangelical, Christian chaplains. Secondly, it is realized that culturo-psychological

inertia is a factor in any endeavor to criticize and refine a popular practical theology such

as the ministry of presence. Chaplains have been using presence as a ministerial base for

many centuries. To attempt modification will necessarily meet some resistance. Finally,

though servanthood is an unambiguous doctrine articulated in both the Old and New

Testaments, the ministry of service proper is not. While it is seemingly reasonable to

move from servanthood to the service-ministry model, this logical step is not taken in the

Bible itself. This, of course, gives some leverage to those who might raise doubt as to its

veracity.

 Nevertheless, when juxtaposed, it is difficult to deny the biblico-practical

defensibility of service ministry over and above that of its predecessor. Presence ministry

has served the military chaplaincy well in the past, at least superficially. As stated

before, however, utilitarianism is not a valid proof for the initiation or persistence of any

practical theology. When placed under the proverbial microscope, presence ministry

readily exposes its flaws and limitations. These cannot be ignored and, moreover,

demand amelioration. By evaluating and reformulating the elements and sum of presence

ministry, it is hoped that military chaplains will embrace a model more suited to their

vocation. Chaplains have a high calling indeed. The paradigm they use to fulfill this

calling must rise to the occasion. It is only fitting that God's servants be guided by a

ministry of service. Hazelton's words could scarce offer a better conclusion to this

thesis:

> The ordained minister, in his office and in his person, represents the diakonia of
> the whole church in a unique and indispensable way. His varied roles and duties

all exhibit this representative, vicarious servanthood. He stands in the church as one who serves, else he does not stand at all.[179]

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[179] Hazelton, 523.

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