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Ronit Y. Stahl. *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017. 384 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-97215-5.

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Ronit Y. Stahl's *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America* offers an insightful examination of the growth and development of the chaplaincy, as well as its influence on the broader American religious landscape, from the First World War through the late 1980s. As Stahl convincingly shows, the federal government—wall of separation between church and state notwithstanding—expended significant effort to establish, systematize, and expand its chaplaincy during the twentieth century. State involvement in the world of religion, however, raised a number of constitutional issues, many of them related to the difficult task of reconciling the federal government's responsibility to enable free religious practice, even for soldiers on foreign fields, and the First Amendment prohibition of state-sponsored religion.

Stahl contends that the interplay between the chaplaincy and American religion writ large is best understood as a series of cycles, with wartime developments in the chaplaincy leading to larger changes in religious belief and practice. These societal shifts, of course, eventually came back around to impact the chaplaincy; even the most tentative of steps toward a more diverse chaplaincy helped advance the cause of American religious pluralism, which empowered and emboldened marginalized groups to seek inclusion with the ranks of the "spiritual soldiers" later on. All three cycles began, Stahl observes, as the result of American participation in major military conflicts: the two world wars and the conflict in Vietnam.

The draft of American men into the armed services

during the First World War brought with it a concomitant increase in the need for chaplains and the religious services they provided. Such rapid growth—there were fewer than two hundred chaplains in 1917, compared with nearly 2,500 at war's end—was in turn accompanied by a professionalization of the institution, including the granting of military rank to chaplains in 1920 (p. 43). The wartime and interwar periods found chaplains beginning to promulgate the notion of a "tri-faith" America, which cautiously challenged white ethnic prejudices by including Catholics and Jews as equals alongside Protestants, yet which simultaneously excluded those of other faiths and those of no faith at all.

The Second World War likewise led to the expansion and adaptation of the chaplaincy. Through the use of tools like the popular *Chaplain Jim* radio program, chaplains promoted a type of "moral monotheism" both at home and abroad which stressed regular attendance at religious services, clean living, and toleration of religious difference. (These leaders, Stahl notes, were generally less concerned with the racial injustices baked into a system which allotted only 235 out of over 4,000 total spots to black clergy [p. 115].) Clean living was not always an easy sell to the men in uniform, either, and the pesky problem of promiscuity continued to vex chaplains, many of whom eventually resigned themselves to managing—rather than eliminating—soldiers' sexual activities).

The Vietnam War proved to be just as momentous in the history of the chaplaincy as the world wars which preceded it, albeit in slightly different fashion. Many

chaplains found themselves torn between the prophetic side of their calling (the need to speak out against what they came to see as an unjust, or at least pointless, war) and its pastoral side (the need to provide guidance to co-religionists in the rank and file). The departure from the chaplaincy of some who protested the war granted new opportunities, including leadership roles, to conservative evangelicals, who were less likely to oppose the war and more likely to view the military as a mission field in its own right. Evangelicals were not the only group to make inroads during the latter part of the twentieth century, however; as Stahl notes in a brief epilogue, Buddhists and Muslims both received official recognition during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the chaplaincy continues to move (albeit haltingly) in a more pluralistic direction today.

*Enlisting Faith* is rich in detail and replete with fascinating stories, reflecting its author's training as a historian. (Stahl is currently a fellow with the University of

Pennsylvania's Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy.) The book draws on a wide variety of primary sources, including clerical and governmental records and newspapers, and this review addresses only a handful of the numerous arguments Stahl advances in over 250 pages of narrative. Considerably less attention, for better or for worse, is given to secondary sources in *Enlisting Faith*. What historiographical discussion is present is confined to a handful of endnotes listing books on related topics; even the historiography of the chaplaincy merits only a single end note (p. 280). Consequently, it is not always readily apparent where Stahl breaks new interpretive ground. Even so, largely owing to Stahl's meticulous primary source research, one could hardly hope for a better single volume on the history of the chaplaincy and its impact on American life. Clear and concise writing, an array of photographs, and an attractive dust jacket will make this book a popular choice, both for scholars of military and religious history and for lay readers with an interest in the unusual but highly influential institution.

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