

Abstract

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The doctoral dissertation, titled “Christian Morality and Military Discipline: A Historical-Theological Study,” aims to analyze the convergences and points of intersection between the foundations of Christian morality and military discipline. Our research highlights the fact that it is not limited to prescribing specific duties in individual cases, but seeks to establish fundamental principles applicable to various situations in human life.

A central focus of this work is the analysis of the theological and moral virtues that form the foundation of military virtues. These are: devotion and loyalty, submission and obedience to superiors, camaraderie and the spirit of sacrifice, patriotism, honor and dignity, military valor, military discipline, and esprit de corps.

Chapters III and IV constitute, in fact, the practical study of our research, as we have demonstrated, using historical facts and military documents issued during the war, how the military clergy contributed to sustaining and strengthening the morale of Romanian soldiers involved in the two world wars, as well as the importance of the moral guidance provided for maintaining military discipline.

In addition to the 253 priests mobilized within the army’s structures between 1916 and 1918, monks, nuns, and theology students were also enlisted to serve as orderlies and stretcher-bearers. They were assigned to the army’s mobile hospitals, as well as to those established by *the Romanian Red Cross*, where they cared for tens of thousands of wounded and sick (most of whom were from Moldova). Due to an outbreak of typhus, some of them paid with their lives for the service they undertook out of love for their country.

In Chapter IV, we set out to analyze the moral guidance provided to the Romanian army by the military bishop, Dr. Partenie Ciopron, as well as by the military chaplains under his supervision, based on military documents from that period and information presented in the Military Diocese’s magazine **Arma Cuvântului**.

In Chapter V, we analyzed the consequences of political interference in the army regarding the existence and operation of the moral and spiritual counseling service for Romanian military personnel. Thus, by Decree-Law No. 177 on the general regime of religious denominations, issued on August 3, 1948, the Military Diocese and the Religious Assistance Service were abolished. The religious persecution unleashed by the totalitarian regime was a consequence of the establishment of an atheistic materialist ideology, which sought to expel

God from the human soul; however, this objective of the communist regime did not materialize. Furthermore, I have argued that the communist regime also altered the perception of the purpose of military discipline.

After December 1989, the Church and the Army had the opportunity to reconnect in the work of preserving spiritual and national identity through the signing of *the Protocol regarding the organization and provision of religious assistance in the Romanian Army*, between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Ministry of National Defense. The result of this *Protocol* was the establishment of the Religious Assistance Section, which contributed to the creation of the position of military chaplain and to the organization of competitive examinations for selecting the military clergy who would serve the Ministry of National Defense.

Because I have been providing moral and spiritual counseling for over 20 years at a pre-university military educational institution, I have emphasized the importance of this work in strengthening the moral values of future members of the Romanian Armed Forces.

In a military college or academy, the priest plays a very important role in the moral and spiritual counseling of military cadets and students, as he serves as their “father” due to his role as a spiritual guide. Thus, he can help them when they seek inspiring answers to the various situations they face under certain circumstances or when they are confronted with moral dilemmas—which they could not discuss with just anyone due to their confidential nature—but which find resolution through the sacramental act of Holy Confession.

At the end of this chapter, I drew upon the experience I gained as a military chaplain during the *Resolute Support* mission in the Afghan Theater of Operations, which I carried out with the KAF “Brave Hearts” Force Protection Infantry Battalion from Focșani, from August 15, 2017, to February 15, 2018. On this occasion, I observed and argued for the important role that the military chaplain plays in supporting and strengthening the morale of service members under the extreme stress they face due to constant danger.

At the end of the paper, I included two appendices to provide insight into the specific nature of religious assistance in other military chaplaincies around the world. The first appendix was designed to examine how the United States Military Chaplaincy was organized and the specific nature of the religious counseling provided by Protestant and Roman Catholic military chaplains based on Christian morality during World War I, as well as the stance taken by American civil society, the Protestant clergy in the U.S., and the Anglican clergy in Great Britain regarding the issue of war.

I compiled the second appendix with the aim of presenting how religious assistance is organized in several Eastern armies, where there is a diversity of religious traditions, as well as

its importance in sustaining the morale of military personnel in order to carry out all specific missions. In this context, I analyzed the specific characteristics of religious assistance in the Indian, Sri Lankan, South Korean, and Israeli armed forces. In the Eastern world, where the majority of the population is non-Christian—adhering to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism, Islam, and Judaism—the equivalent term for a chaplain is “*religious expert*.” This may be a Sikh guru, a Hindu sage, or a Muslim imam, and in the Israeli military, it is a military rabbi. Through their religious activities, these religious experts (or counselors) are similar to the chaplain in a Christian military.