

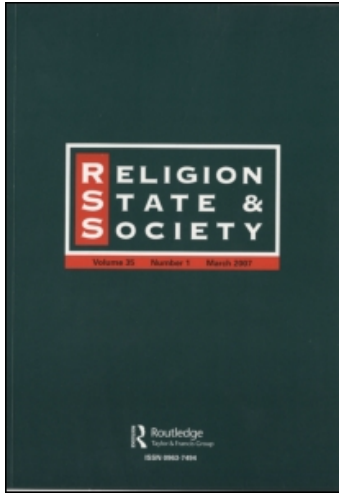
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# The Changing Role of Protestant Military Chaplaincy in Germany: from Raising Military Morale to Praying for Peace<sup>1</sup>

ANGELIKA DÖRFLER-DIERKEN

## ABSTRACT

*Focusing on Lutheran chaplaincy, I argue that the German Protestant Church expects chaplains to be the moral conscience of the army. To facilitate this role, and to ensure that the chaplains' own consciences are never again blunted by their environment, the chaplaincy is designed to prevent clergy from becoming too closely integrated into the military. Chaplains are structurally outside the chain of command and have no military rank; their terms of service are restricted to between six and 12 years. Their role is to sharpen the consciences of individual soldiers, and to ask whether the military operations in which the Bundeswehr participates are actually conducive to peace or whether they add to the spiral of violence. This structural separation is not total, however. The Christian churches are still privileged by law in Germany, and the military's exclusively Christian chaplains are obliged to deliver compulsory ethical training to all soldiers irrespective of their professed faith (or atheism). I also argue that the challenge will be to maintain a prophetic ministry (shaped in armed forces which were created for defensive engagements only, and which did not engage in combat operations until 1995) now that German chaplains are once again supporting soldiers engaged in battlefield action. Promoting the civilian churches' peace ethic necessarily leads to conflict with secular politicians and military leaders. Even in conditions designed to strengthen their primary allegiance to their sending churches, military chaplains may feel conflicted when the soldiers they support are criticised by clergy 'outside'.*

## Introduction

This article deals with the development of pastoral care in the German armed forces from early modern times to the present, focusing especially on the role of the Lutheran military chaplaincy.<sup>2</sup> It does not discuss questions such as whether the description of the chaplain's military profession corresponds with the requirements of military duty, whether the current politico-military challenges call for a different self-image of soldiers or whether the political decision-makers should assign the armed forces different tasks. However, the question addressed in this article arises from the observation that the keyword of global politics and modern warfare is 'peace'. The military efforts of western nations are under strict limitation by law and public opinion, and this situation has consequences not only for the individual soldier but for

military chaplaincy too. The military chaplain has become the personification of the military organisation's conscience.

The article is organised in six main parts.

After a short introduction to a recent discussion in Germany on the Afghanistan experience, in the second section of the article I address the current state of German Protestant military chaplaincy. In the third section I discuss the fact that the Protestant Church expects its military chaplains to share the reflections of the 2007 memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany *Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen* (officially translated as *Live from God's Peace – Care for Just Peace*) (EKD, 2007) (hereafter the Peace Memorandum). This situation marks a big significant change and is the culmination of a long process that began with a certain kind of cleric in uniform.

In the fourth section I discuss the fact that the uniformed cleric was an integral part of the military in Prussian times, who incited his soldier comrades by preaching the destruction of the king's enemies. The last phase in the history of the uniformed chaplain is represented by the *Wehrmacht* cleric, when military chaplains were subordinated to the military high command.

Structural reforms in the military chaplaincy after the Second World War, which took place within the context of wider reforms to pastoral care in state institutions, are addressed in the fifth section of the article. The aim of these reforms was to prevent a revival of bellicosity. Therefore the military chaplain was intellectually and emotionally bound to civilian congregations, and his duty refashioned as the promotion of civil and peace-orientated ethics in the military organisation. The control of military violence, by means of enhancing soldiers' self-control, is the main purpose and office of the clergy.

The sixth section of the article explains Germany's postwar democratic philosophy of leadership and civic education (*Innere Führung*) for the Federal Armed Forces. This concept aims at creating morally steadfast soldiers who will not execute any illegal or immoral commands and will orientate their actions toward peace. This philosophy converges with the concerns of the Protestant Church as expressed in the Peace Memorandum. Military chaplains articulate this ethic to the soldiers, and are supposed to continually question whether the operations of the *Bundeswehr* are in harmony with the peace philosophy of the church. The article finishes with a quick glance at the future: there is a danger that the experience of deployment in hostile environments might lead to the emergence of bellicose rhetoric and corresponding actions.

### **Current Debate in Germany on the Afghanistan Experience**

In early 2010 the bishop of the Hannover *Landeskirche* and chairwoman of the Council of Protestant churches in Germany (EKD, *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*), Dr Margot Käßmann, provoked an excited debate when she used a sermon to criticise the engagement of the Federal Republic of Germany in Afghanistan. Käßmann stressed that 'Nothing is good in Afghanistan' (*Nichts ist gut in Afghanistan*), criticising public perception of the conflict promoted by the political establishment in Germany. She chose Dresden as the place from which to criticise German–Afghanistan engagement because the name of this city reminds all Germans that they know very well the heavy price the civilian population pays during bombing raids (Käßmann, 2010). A large number of church members applauded her, but most German politicians argued that it is not the job of a bishop to criticise Parliament and

its command of the army, or to polarise public opinion. Politicians and soldiers called her arguments wrong and ignorant.<sup>3</sup>

The military chaplains of the Protestant churches in Germany found themselves in a difficult position regarding Käßmann's evaluation of the Afghanistan engagement: they felt torn between their civilian and their military obligations, between the peace-orientated ethics of their civilian churches and their engagement in a military organisation. Because most Protestant soldiers distanced themselves from their civilian bishop, the clergy felt forced to defend the soldiers. Some Protestant military chaplains identified themselves with their soldiers and criticised Käßmann's position in public.<sup>4</sup> The Protestant bishop who supervises Protestant military chaplains, Dr Martin Dutzmann, was forced to find a way to mediate the different parties – and to defend, in his military environment, the main ideas of the peace ethics developed by the German Protestant Church (see Militärbischof, 2010). The discussions in the first days of the year 2010 give an impression of the difficult human and theological position of the Protestant military chaplaincy in Germany. Sometimes the clergy feel torn between the ethics of peace and their strong sense of loyalty to German soldiers in Afghanistan. This situation further illustrates the important transformation that has occurred in the role of military chaplains in Germany in the six decades since the Second World War: from being primarily concerned with enhancing combat power to serving the cause of peace. German military chaplains are now expected to be the conscience of the army – a duty their church imposes on them. If the peace-orientated ethics of the civilian church are to be promoted in the military's operations abroad, conflicts with military superiors and politicians will be the result.

### Military Chaplaincy in the Federal Republic of Germany

Currently there are more than 100 Protestant military chaplains serving in the German army and slightly fewer than 100 Roman Catholic chaplains (Dörfler-Dierken, 2009a, II-2.1.5, 6). Until today not a single Jew, Muslim, Buddhist or representative of another religion ministers to German soldiers, and even Pentecostals have no military chaplains. This mirrors the religious situation in Germany, where there is less religious and confessional pluralism than – for example – in the USA, but it is also the consequence of German church–state regulations (*Staatskirchenverträge, Militärseelsorgevertrag*) which prefer the mainstream Christian churches and allow them special influence.<sup>5</sup> Therefore Christian theologians often feel like watchmen and keepers of democracy, peace and freedom of conscience.<sup>6</sup> This German theological construct is called '*Wächteramt der Kirche*' (the clerical duty to observe and discuss the moral standards of the community and state). According to German law the conscience of every citizen, and soldier too, is an integral part of his or her humanity and personality, and that conscience cannot be overruled by any military command. This remains valid even for those soldiers whose religious convictions do not include a concept of conscience.

Even today the number of German soldiers with Muslim or Buddhist backgrounds is very small, and although the regulations guarantee them free exercise of belief, the few who serve in the *Bundeswehr* often do not want their religious orientation to be known by their superiors and comrades. The number of soldiers of Orthodox Christian belief is also unknown. A third of German soldiers identify themselves as Catholic, another third as Lutheran. The remaining third do not declare any religious allegiance or non-belief, and it is therefore impossible to work out the number of atheists and Muslims in the armed forces. Although 60 per cent of young soldiers come from eastern Germany,

an area with an atheist orientation, there is no attempt to develop a new type of military chaplaincy. The possibility of soldiers being accompanied by any kind of atheist chaplains or humanist ethic advisers is still not discussed.

Protestant and Catholic military chaplains are responsible not only for services, prayers and funerals but for moral guidance and ethical training too. In former years each soldier could opt to join the lessons of the chaplain of his choice or to refuse any moral training. Now an ethical education is obligatory for all soldiers. The military chaplaincy of both confessions, the Roman Catholic priest and the Protestant pastor, work as ethical advisers and state teachers, irrespective of the individual soldier's religious or confessional convictions (see Bundesministerium, 2009).

Before starting their service in the *Bundeswehr* the Protestant military chaplains have served in congregations of the various Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany for some years, and almost all of them are mainstream Lutherans. Their home churches are the typical German '*Landeskirchen*', Protestant churches of a certain territory. Not a single German military chaplain comes from an Evangelical church or promotes Evangelical convictions; nobody preaches that the soldiers have to fight 'the last battle', that they have to promote the heavenly kingdom of peace with their weapons, or that their duty is the elimination of evil by the killing of God's enemies. Since 1995 German military chaplains have accompanied German soldiers on their peacekeeping missions abroad. After six or 12 years, military chaplains return to civilian congregations, to ensure that they do not lose their civilian mental orientation and ethics.

The theological orientation of Protestant German military chaplains differs somewhat from that of US army chaplains. Anne C. Loveland observes that after mainstream denominations had spoken out against the Vietnam War, Evangelical clergy entered the army and had the chance to flourish, mingling patriotic sentiments with religious convictions. Many of them believe that America has to stand on the side of God in a titanic struggle between the forces of good and evil (see Loveland, 1996; Bergen, 2007).<sup>7</sup> Their main interest is winning souls for God, confirmed by the soldier's baptism. These observations are not valid for German military chaplaincy: if it happens that a German military chaplain baptises a soldier during a military engagement in Kosovo or Afghanistan, that baptism expresses the soldier's individual decision, but it is not a promise to combat the enemies of the Lord or a response to a chaplain's missionary approach.<sup>8</sup>

These facts and examples illustrate the fact that the military chaplaincy of the Protestant Church in Germany has moved away from the Prussian tradition of field chaplains and battlefield preachers embedded in the military hierarchy to strengthen the soldier's fighting power. Contemporary German chaplains have found a new role that sharpens and supports the conscience of soldiers. The period during which they minister in the army is only a short break between engagements in civil congregations. Therefore the military chaplains share peace-orientated, violence-criticising ethics with all other Protestant and Roman Catholic chaplains from within the civilian church.

### **Soldiers as Servants of Peace**

In the papers and sermons of the Christian leaders in the Federal Republic of Germany – Protestant as well as Roman Catholic – soldiers are expected to regard themselves as 'servants of peace'.<sup>9</sup>

At first glance this seems to be a euphemism, as every child knows that the military profession is characterised by war, combat, killing and death. That view of the

military profession, which had prevailed until recently, was expressed by the reformer Martin Luther in his *Kriegsleuteschrift* issued in 1526: a short strife is, as *ultima ratio*, better than permanent injustice if there are no longer any other means of resolving a conflict (see Stümke, 2007). In that perspective, soldiers are indeed ‘servants of peace’, at least of a peace which can be enforced by military means. Contrary to that view of the military profession is the perception that peace is not the result of war and violence, a view reflecting scepticism about the use of military force.

This latter perception too can be illustrated by referencing another author from the period of the Reformation. The humanist Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam defined peace in his book *Querela pacis* as the nature of God. In his opinion, the conciliation between God and mankind means that people accept the divine gift of peace, thus having their behaviour towards each other pacified. From Erasmus’ perspective the definition of soldiers as ‘servants of peace’ implies a fundamental change in their job description: soldiers should regard themselves, and act it as world police, diplomats and development aid workers. Not only should they refrain from using force exclusively for the purposes of law and order, they should not use force at all, if possible. If they ‘fight’ against others they should do so at the intellectual level: by means of education, information, negotiation and deterrence. Should they actually be required to use force, they should do so like the police, whose actions are aimed at de-escalation, rather than at achieving a ‘victory’. The ability to differentiate between offenders and innocents thus becomes a soldier’s most important virtue.

Like any type of pastoral care, military chaplaincy is aimed at individuals who are engaged in their professions as part of a network of relations in their social environment. Chaplains in the armed forces work in a particularly sensitive field. Their main duty is to remind soldiers daily about the negative aspects of the violence they use.

Chaplains in the armed forces not only render their services to individual soldiers, they are also involved in the special culture of the military organisation. They must bear in mind that the individuals they are concerned with are members of this organisation. Since the end of the Second World War the major churches in Europe have rarely been faced with the phenomena of violence and the means of force. During the period of deterrence in Europe and of the liberation wars waged in other parts of the world the issue of military force was largely ignored both by military chaplaincy as a church service and by the individual chaplains themselves. *De facto*, what the representatives of churches espoused in the military organisation was almost irrelevant, because the armed forces never got to see real action. In the last decade, however, the Federal Republic of Germany has seen fundamental changes in this respect.

The operations of the *Bundeswehr* during the state-building wars in collapsing Yugoslavia, which was the first combat mission of the *Bundeswehr* since its foundation in 1955, have at least convinced both the German population and the Council of the EKD that military chaplaincy has an essential role to play again. Furthermore, the ecclesial ethics of peace, most recently confirmed in the 2007 Peace Memorandum (EKD, 2007), are considered to be valid for the chaplaincy service. The memorandum is intended to serve as a guidance and rule for military chaplaincy, rooted in the Protestant and broader Christian traditions.

These points are the preliminary end of a process which can be described as a radical change. The work of the chaplains in the *Bundeswehr* can no longer be derived from the tradition of Prussian field chaplaincy. After the Second World War, fundamental reforms were pushed through which gave the German military chaplaincy a civilian, pacifist character. They were aimed at ruling out once and for all the possibility that the military chaplaincy could play the same role as it did in the

*Wehrmacht*, following Prussian tradition, where the uniformed chaplain was a warrior and combatant abreast with the soldiers – a soldier of words (see notes 11 to 14). He incited his fellows and preached hatred towards the enemy. Teaching them obedience and contempt of death, he supported the military effort.

When the *Bundeswehr* was formed after the Second World War – solely for the purpose of defence – chaplains were responsible for helping the soldiers exercise their constitutional right to undisturbed practice of religion (see the German Constitution, Article 4.2). To that end, the Federal Republic of Germany and the EKD, which is a voluntary federation of all regional Protestant churches, ratified the Military Chaplaincy Agreement in 1957 (see Vertrag, 2007). That agreement, which was the first one ever concluded between the state and the Protestant Church in Germany, helped overcome the tradition of Prussian military chaplaincy.

### **From Battlefield Preachers to Chaplains in the *Wehrmacht***

The formation of a standing army in Prussia in the late seventeenth century was accompanied by the introduction of government-controlled pastoral care for soldiers – but only for Protestants. Field preachers in the Prussian army were responsible for fostering the soldiers' education and morality and thus for encouraging them to loyally perform their duties and, in particular, for countering their tendency towards desertion. This could not have been easy, as a medieval saying was 'forced oaths God loathes' and forced recruitment was the usual practice.<sup>10</sup> In a short daily sermon the soldiers were instructed that God's wrath would come upon them if they neglected their military duties and that they should cherish their ruler, who would protect the *patria* as the *pater familias* protects his family and acts on behalf of God (von Salisch, 2009, p. 302).<sup>11</sup> Warning the soldiers not to engage in indecent activities with the female population in garrison towns, where they lived in camps for weeks and months particularly in winter, and instructing the soldiers to perform their duties properly, the field preachers were to convince them that God would grant victory only to 'devout warriors' who would not have to fear death. That argument inspired the soldier's life-despising courage. Preaching reconciliation with God became a means of increasing combat power. In the eighteenth and even as late as the nineteenth century soldiers therefore liked to partake of the Lord's Supper before they went into battle.

Religion also played a major motivating role during the Wars of Liberation in the early nineteenth century. Protestant theologians and poets placed themselves – at least in their writing – at the forefront of the Prussian troops and denounced the foreign ruler Napoleon as the Antichrist. Fifty years later the War of Liberation had been mythologised and the victory interpreted as a consequence of the spiritual awakening of German soldiers. That popular interpretation of the victory again played a role in propaganda during the Franco-German War of 1870–71. The victory of Sedan on 2 September 1871 seemed to confirm belief in the superiority of German weapons. For that reason, the earlier anti-French propaganda was revived at the beginning of the First World War in the summer of 1914. Protestant academic theologians and clergymen spread a triumphalist atmosphere, which arguably reflected their complete failure as theologians.<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of the Second World War the intellectual mood had changed and the outbreak of the war was not unanimously justified by chaplains and theology professors on religious grounds. However, despite occasional pacifist criticism, nationalist and bellicose traditions survived in the Protestant Church and among many theology professors, even though the National Socialist government's policy towards religion could have raised doubts (Kampmann, 2009).

Chaplains and priests accompanied the soldiers on the battlefields and in the rear in both the First and the Second World Wars. Their pastoral care and religious services did not differ fundamentally from those of earlier times. In both wars they were to preach to the soldiers that the war was the will of God and to provide spiritual support for them. During both wars the chaplains were not subordinate to the bishop of their church but to the military commander.<sup>13</sup> Some chaplains in the *Wehrmacht* may have felt sympathy with the *Bekennende Kirche*, trying to distance themselves mentally from the armed forces of an unjust totalitarian regime. De facto, however, the chaplains and priests in the *Wehrmacht* were subordinate to the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (Armed Forces High Command) and completely marginalised, not least because of their small number compared with the number of soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

### Pastoral Care in Special State Institutions

After 1945 the relationship between soldiers, the church and society was fundamentally redefined in the Federal Republic of Germany: chaplains were excluded from the military hierarchy and chain of command.<sup>15</sup> Thenceforth, they were to proclaim the gospel of peace within the 'total institution' (Goffman, 1973) in harmony with the doctrines of their churches. As (nearly) all chaplains in the *Bundeswehr*, who have been joined by female Protestant chaplains since 1993, return to their civilian parishes after a relatively short term of six to 12 years, the development of a militarised spiritual ethics is prevented by the new organisational sociological and structural conditions (Dörfler-Dierken, 2008).

This military chaplaincy without military rank and without the duty of obedience, which relates the clergy to the church and not to the military, is based on the free status of the two major Christian churches in German democracy. As they are corporate bodies under public law they have the right and the duty to participate in societal discourse on all issues of political interest and development. They have a vote and a seat in the supervisory bodies of the public broadcasting companies and in various advisory bodies of the Federal Government and the governments of the German territories; they may publish position papers on societal and political issues and are free to organise events or to support movements. Chaplains are particularly protected by the secrecy of confession. The German legislature's intention was to encourage the churches to comment on issues in those highly sensitive areas which serve the lawful and orderly exercise of sovereign powers. This is associated with the expectation that the representatives of the churches receive a special ethical education, that they are sensible against the tempting force of power and violence and are able to differentiate between legality and morality. Consequently they enjoy a particular status, which corresponds with a particular expectation on the part of the state.

The service rendered by chaplains in the armed forces is founded on the free practice of religion guaranteed by the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which also applies to Germans who live and work in special state institutions (such as the police, correctional facilities, psychiatric hospitals or the *Bundeswehr*). Other European countries do not have similar regulations, but the outlined relationship between the church and the state is typical for the German situation.

### Military Chaplaincy and 'Innere Führung'

The originator of the new concept of military chaplaincy was Wolf Stefan Traugott Graf von Baudissin (1907–93), a prominent Lutheran Christian, known as 'father of



the concept of *Innere Führung*' (leadership development and civic education). His 'Staatsbürger in Uniform' (citizens in uniform) are immune to totally submitting to the state and its unreasonable demands because they enjoy the guarantee of freedom of conscience, like any other citizen.<sup>16</sup> Putting on a uniform should not mean that German servicemen and women yield completely to the demands of the German Parliament and their superiors. On the contrary: an autonomous and mature soldier acting in the spirit of the Basic Law should accept the strains of defending law and liberty as a free man, knowing that he, like 'any other man bearing responsibility for other people and the mission, has only his own conscience to guide him'.<sup>17</sup> Such a soldier cannot be adequately defined as a recipient of orders and an obedient instrument of political and military leaders. Rather, he is an intrinsically motivated individual who acts on conviction, seeking to square all his activities and all military actions he is responsible for with law and his conscience. In doing so, he may soon be confronted with a conflict: a mission may be legal according to international law but far from morally right and reasonable before the conscience of an individual. The lesson which Baudissin and many others had learned from the uncritical obedience to criminal orders in the *Wehrmacht* was that there is a need to place an extraordinarily great responsibility on the individual soldier. Nothing and nobody stopped the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*, neither the military leaders nor the military chaplains nor the consciences of the soldiers themselves. Therefore Baudissin and his supporters – soldiers and politicians alike – wanted not only to form the *Bundeswehr* on the basis of an entirely different spirit, but also to take institutional and organisational precautions against the danger of the moral self-degradation of the new German soldier. This resulted in the concept of '*Innere Führung*',<sup>18</sup> and a new concept of military chaplaincy (Dörfler-Dierken, 2009b). This concept is valid for both main Christian churches in Germany, Protestant as well as Catholic. Although it has been developed by a member of a Lutheran church, it does not exclude other confessions and arguably it would be possible to transfer it to non-Christian religions, if they accept the idea of conscience.<sup>19</sup>

During recent years other countries have experienced similar changes: the military chaplain is perceived less as an instrument to bless the army and to strengthen the fighting power of the soldier by the promise that he faces death in a blessed state, and more as something like the conscience of the army and a moral adviser for military leaders.<sup>20</sup> Germany's military chaplains had to find their new role after the Second World War. In other countries of the western world, military chaplaincy started to find its new role after other challenges. The changing role of military chaplaincy reflects experiences of extreme military violence against civilians during the Vietnam War, and experiences of helplessness in front of the massacre of Srebrenica or of the violation of humanity in Abu Ghraib.<sup>21</sup>

The Peace Memorandum (EKD 2007) states that both the concept of '*Innere Führung*', which is founded on the individual soldier's freedom of conscience, and military duty itself, are aimed at peace, which is the goal of all efforts to exercise sovereign powers. This peace ethic should also be implemented in the traditionally militarised chaplaincy.<sup>22</sup> It almost seems that the efforts made by the churches' peace movement have been successful at last and have come to fruition in military chaplaincy. War and peace are no longer regarded as two equal alternatives that Christians may choose between. Rather, war is now not only considered an 'evil' (Martin Luther) but also a 'sin against God and degradation of man', which the World Council of Churches stated as early as 1948 in Section IV of its paper *The Church and International Disorder* published at its first plenary assembly in Amsterdam.<sup>23</sup> Consequently the demands

placed on military chaplaincy have become far more complex. It is no longer sufficient to side with the soldiers and to loyally support political decisions. Rather, the individual chaplains are obliged to propagate the church's peace message within the military organisation. They are required, like Christians in society and politics, to ask time and again whether the military operations in which the *Bundeswehr* participates are actually conducive to peace in the spirit of the Peace Memorandum (EKD, 2007) or whether they add to the spiral of violence.<sup>24</sup>

As military duty is aimed at peace it is finally accepted and described by the Peace Memorandum as the use of force in preserving law and order.

Christian ethics are fundamentally shaped by a willingness for nonaggression (Matthew 5:38 ff) and a preferential option for non-violence. However, in a world that is as unquiet and unredeemed as ever, serving our neighbours may mean protecting life and law through forcible resistance (see Rom. 13:1–7). Both options – refusal to bear arms *and* agreement to perform military service – must result from responsible decisions made in good conscience and with respect for the opposing view. (EKD, 2007, nos 60, 42)

### **Military Chaplaincy as Peace Service for the Soldiers of the *Bundeswehr***

Soldiers are expected to perform their duty as '*Staatsbürger in Uniform*' (citizens in uniform) educated on the basis of peace ethics and committed to peace. Military chaplaincy is to support them in this respect. It is to act neither as an appendix to the military apparatus nor as part of the command structures of the armed forces but as a 'watchman' integrated in the civilian church to the maximum possible extent. The free organisation of military chaplaincy in the *Bundeswehr* is aimed at preventing chaplains from inciting soldiers to impetuous fighting and killing, as chaplains often did in the past. The commitment of the *Bundeswehr* as a parliamentary army to the precept of peace mandated by the Basic Law is supplemented and reinforced by the normative tie between the sermon and the gospel of peace. The democratic state permits that influence on the members of the *Bundeswehr* and thus puts limitations on itself as it knows that it depends on people who act in harmony with their conscience; but as conscience is free it must be exposed to free influences (von Schubert, 2009, pp. 175–80). Developing and sharpening the soldiers' conscience is the responsibility of the chaplains in the *Bundeswehr*. Moral decisions, however, are not chosen freely but bound by ethics based on the churches' words of peace and the message of the gospels. Performing their special duty, the chaplains and the soldiers of the *Bundeswehr* need the support of Christians and the public. This is particularly true today, since operations abroad have illustrated how fast the communication of experience formed in a hostile environment takes on a life of its own within the military community and society and results in a bellicose rhetoric which may then turn into bellicose actions. We will soon see whether the institutional and mental orientation of military chaplaincy in the *Bundeswehr* will prove itself under these conditions.

### **Notes**

- 1 For purposes of clarification requested by the Federal Ministry of Defence the author declares: 'The views and opinions presented in this paper are solely those of the author and do not necessarily express the view or opinion of the Federal Ministry of Defence'.

- 2 The Roman Catholic Church has a different tradition from that of the Protestant Church because of its relationship to the pope. It has never mingled with nationalism and patriotism as deeply as the German Protestant Churches and has therefore never felt obliged to renounce its own history. This is why I am concentrating on the traditions of the German Protestant Church. For the Roman Catholic Church see the literature in note 15.
- 3 In the meantime Käßmann has left public office (not because of her criticism of Afghanistan but because she was caught driving while under the influence of alcohol).
- 4 The military chaplain Carsten Wächter wrote an interesting letter criticising Käßmann's position (see Wächter, 2010). As far as I know, Wächter did not face any consequences.
- 5 See for example the regulation between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Protestant Church (EKD) regarding military chaplaincy of 22 February 1957 (Vertrag, 2007). Article 16 reads: 'Die Militärgeistlichen stehen in einem geistlichen Auftrag, in dessen Erfüllung sie von staatlichen Weisungen unabhängig sind' ('Military chaplains have a clerical order which makes them independent from orders of the state'). This regulation is valid for the Roman Catholic military chaplaincy too. As early as 1933 National Socialist Germany concluded a state-church agreement with the Roman Catholic Church, the *Reichskonkordat*, which also provided for military chaplaincy (see Güssen, 1989).
- 6 The concept of the 'clerical watchman' was born after the experiences in Nazi times, when the *Bekennende Kirche* tried to protect the independence of the Protestant churches in several parts of Germany. For the whole context and concept, see Huber (1973).
- 7 For the history of military chaplaincy in general, see Bergen (2004a); for the history of American military chaplaincy, see Brinsfield (2006).
- 8 An official document, edited and distributed by the administrative body of the Protestant military chaplaincy, *Glauben leben: Evangelische Militärseelsorge in der Bundeswehr* (EKA, 2007), has a picture of a soldier's baptism on its first page, but it offers no narrative or accompanying statistics. Some baptisms may occur annually but mission is not the main interest of the chaplains. The complaints section for German soldiers, called 'Der Wehrbeauftragte des Deutschen Bundestages', does not record any complaints with regard to religiously motivated discrimination by superiors or military chaplains. In contrast, American superiors are accused of prejudice or preference shown to soldiers of minor rank. 'A Pentagon investigation into the religious climate at the Air Force Academy here ... did find that officers and faculty members periodically used their positions to promote their Christian beliefs and failed to accommodate non-Christian cadets, for example refusing them time off for religious holidays' (Goodstein, 2005).
- 9 For the Protestant position, see EKD (2007). For the Roman Catholic position, see Soldaten (2005) and the papal encyclical *Gaudium et spes*.
- 10 See Lehmann (2004). An illustrative and impressive example for the chaplain's work is the biography of the common soldier Ulrich Bräker (1735–98), who was born in Switzerland and served with the Prussian army until he managed to desert during the battle of Lobositz in Bohemia. Later he wrote down his experiences (Bräker, 1993). A textbook example of the instruction of soldiers is Treuhertziger (1703).
- 11 After his victory over the Saxon army near Lobositz (Lovosice) on 1 October 1756 the Prussian king Frederick II (the Great) forcibly recruited Saxon soldiers to serve in his army. They deserted whenever possible and joined Frederick's enemies. They did so on the grounds of loyalty to their ruler, although he was not seen as a messianic figure like the Prussian king. Indeed, the patriotism of Saxons was more moderate than that of the Prussians. For the history of Prussian military chaplaincy see Marschke (2005).
- 12 This phenomenon has been described several times, most recently in Vollnhals (2009).
- 13 The earliest documents on Prussian field chaplains show that the regiment commander had a say in choosing his field chaplain and that the field chaplains were subordinate both to the commander and to the military bishop appointed by the king. Every year the military superiors had to evaluate the chaplain of their regiment. See Dörfler-Dierken (forthcoming).
- 14 On Protestant pastoral care in the *Wehrmacht*, see Bergen (2004b), Faulkner (2010), Beese (1995), Messerschmidt (1969) and Kaiser (2007). On Catholic pastoral care, with special

- emphasis on its control, see Sinderhauf (2007). In addition to the chaplains in the *Wehrmacht* there were pastors and priests who did not hold a clerical office but performed 'regular' military duties. Members of the Jesuit Order have recently become a subject of research (see Leugers, 2009).
- 15 The Military Chaplaincy Agreement (see Vertrag, 2007) stipulates in Article 2 (1), 114: 'Die Militärseelsorge als Teil der kirchlichen Arbeit wird im Auftrag und unter Aufsicht der Kirchen ausgeübt' ('Military chaplain service is rendered as part of church work on behalf and under the supervision of the church').
  - 16 Constitution, Article 4 (1). See also the *Soldatengesetz* (Legal Status of Military Personnel Act), para. 36.
  - 17 'In Konfliktsituationen steht der Soldat – wie jeder andere Mensch mit Verantwortung für Mitmensch und Auftrag – allein vor seinem Gewissen' (von Baudissin, 2006, p. 232).
  - 18 See Bundesministerium (2008), and a summary of its main ideas in Dörfler-Dierken (2007).
  - 19 Recently the *Bundeswehr* has started a campaign to deepen soldiers' interest in religious questions. The Ministry of Defence published a booklet for soldiers to introduce them to religious questions and traditions (Ebeling, 2010). This should increase respect for religious differences between soldiers as well as respect between German soldiers and civilians in foreign countries.
  - 20 See Bergen (2007), who explains the difficulties of that role for American military chaplains: 'Even in cases where the discussion has been, for example, [that] a chaplain has a duty to be the conscience of the military, that has been a very contested role for chaplains. Chaplains who have taken that upon themselves have frequently found that it's not a role that their military superiors welcome from them. [For example] Kermit Johnson, who opposed the Reagan administration's policies regarding nuclear weapons and El Salvador placed himself in an untenable position. He was basically pushed out of his position as chief of chaplains.' The German military chaplaincy tries to avoid every kind of political stress by concentrating on the questions of *cura animae*. For the American discussion, see Loveland (2004).
  - 21 Unavoidably the chaplaincy's role as conscience of the army leads to conflicts with military superiors and with politicians. Soldiers' questions about the legitimacy of a particular war effort are discussed as of importance for its success (see Biehl, 2004).
  - 22 See Huber (1973, p. 232): 'The practice of using religion for military purposes, which was widely typical of military chaplaincy in the past, has not come to an end even in the *Bundeswehr*' (translated). Huber made that judgment more than 15 years after the conclusion of the Military Chaplaincy Agreement. That opinion was occasionally reiterated in the decades that followed.
  - 23 The paper states that given developments in technology and, in particular, of the nuclear bomb, 'the usual assumption that a just war can be waged with just weapons for a just cause can no longer be upheld under these conditions'. The text is published in Greschat and Krumwiede (1999). This quotation is on p. 205.
  - 24 The debate over the appropriate definition and description of the operation in Afghanistan – peace or assistance mission – at the beginning of this year is a striking example.

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