

Reflections of a chaplain: War and peace

by Reverend T.L. Strayhand

Many Americans watched with mixed emotions the signing of a cease fire agreement in Vietnam. It was our hope that all American Servicemen would be able to return home safely from Vietnam. Prayers were said throughout the country for a lasting peace.

I could not help but think about the time I had spent in Vietnam and other war torn areas. I personally thank God for the cessation of heart breaking, blood shedding, family wrecking, economy draining, miserably shooting and treacherous hostilities in a long war. We cannot help but pray that the Vietnamese people will have an opportunity to enjoy the blessings of an era of peace.

In 1965 and 1966 I felt the sorrows of the Vietnam conflict in a very personal way. As a military chaplain at Fort Benning, Georgia, I worked with the men and their families of the 1st Air Cavalry Division as they prepared for and went to Vietnam. After the men left for Vietnam, many of their families stayed on or near the military post awaiting their return. Many of them came to the chapel where I conducted services because they had gone there when the men were preparing to go overseas.

It was in what was called the Iron Triangle and around Pleiku, Vietnam where many of the men were felled by the enemy. All Chaplains at Fort Benning were put on 24 hour duty rosters to go with the notification officers to notify the next of kin when husbands or relatives were missing or killed in action. No one was notified by phone, it was a personal message to each one. The ordeal of that experience cannot be explained in detail for lack of words and space. Some samples may help to understand what the actions and reactions were as a result of the war. It was a common experience to go two and three times a day to notify someone that the worst had happened. There was no color distinction. The notification officers were thoroughly briefed and had in writing what they were supposed to say. It was after he had expressed regrets and told

the person the sad news that he often looked to the chaplain to find the appropriate words of comfort for himself and the family. Many young officers were so shaken that they could hardly say the words. Some families would see you coming toward the house in an army staff car with chauffer and begin screaming because they felt that they knew what the message would be. Some would not let you in the house but ask you not to deliver the message fearing that it was bad. On one occasion the person sat still and heard the news, then bolted from the chair and ran out of the back door down a steep embankment. The delivery of a death message to one very close friend of my family caught all of us by surprise when the lady fainted at our feet. It was then that I thanked God that the military had started allowing a lady to go along with us and that one was there at the time. The situation became so acute until we stopped using military vehicles and used our personal automobiles. It was not unusual to have a neighbor come over and help console a neighbor and then you go back in the afternoon to inform that neighbor who helped to console in the morning that her husband had suffered the same fate. This was war with its heartaches and heartbreaks. A problem with which so many people had to deal from day to day.

In 1966 I too received orders to go to Vietnam. During my one year stay in Vietnam as chaplain, I logged many air miles by different types of planes because many times it was too dangerous to drive to where the troops had to serve. Land mines on the road, snipers and enemy ambushes made you appreciate different modes of travel. I saw the end results of war in a land where it was being waged. The Vietnamese people were examples of what war can do for or to you. Fear gripped many people who did not know what the next day nor next hour would bring. There were American and Vietnamese casualties of the war. In hospitals they were there with physical and psychological effects of the mines, shells, grenades and



Dr. T.L. Strayhand

other weapons of war. Many questions were in their eyes when you stopped at their bedside. There were no easy answers when a youth with a twisted face would ask, "Chaplain, how do I look?" Or a 19 year old who would never be able to walk again with her legs would ask, "Chaplain, do you think I will ever be able to get married," or "What kind of future do you think I have now?"

I am so glad I never used up all my prayers. I always had more to say. I prayed often with and for the men in and out of battle. I must admit that on one occasion I prayed extra for my commanding officer. The intelligence officer told us in a briefing that an enemy sniper unit was in the town where we were stationed. They blew up an ammunition dump and the report said that they were there to assassinate officers of our unit by rank beginning at the top. I happened to be the third ranking officer in the unit, there was the Commanding officer, the executive officer and the chaplain in that order. Thanks be to God they never accomplished their mission.

When I returned to the U.S. in 1967, I was stationed at Oakland Army Base in California. There men were processed daily to go to Vietnam. Counseling men and their families became my heaviest duty in those two years. This was a relief to my family who had spent the year when I was in Vietnam on the military post at Fort Benning with other waiting families, not knowing what kind of news would come to them.

We hope there will be peace again in the world. In

1945 we rejoiced when the war ended. I was in Europe when the war ended there. While we were awaiting shipment to the Pacific Theater we received word that the war in the Pacific had ended. Most men returned to the United States with a feeling of pride that they had accomplished their mission. I enjoyed a few peaceful years in school and the civilian pastorate. I found myself reentering the military near the end of the Korean war. I arrived in Korea after the cease fire agreement had been signed. There we experienced a few incidents where it seemed that some people had not got the word that they were supposed to stop shooting. I found myself in Germany during tense moments when it was difficult to get in and out of Berlin. They say we had a period of Cold War while people rebuilt and reclaimed lost possessions and veterans tried to make a new life for themselves before involvement in Vietnam.

War is as bad as they say it is no matter who says it. As a retired Military Chaplain I am glad there is a positive movement for peace. Let all of us pray and work together that man will learn to settle disputes another way and fighting will become obsolete. If we could now spend as much time, energy, money and mobilize as many forces and work together as hard for peace as we have done for war I am sure we can have peace. We can have peace a long time. In the segregated military, the late President Johnson was wise and brave enough to help us start living, eating, working and riding together on the homefront by his persuasion and help of a strong congress. Will we now build a lasting peace? We have learned that when one person or nation thinks he is better than another and tries to treat him as less than worthy of respect, rights and equalities, and tries to take away from him that which is rightfully his, we have always had war. Let's try something different for peace. I would not give anything for my experiences at home and abroad but I would give everything to keep future young people from having to go through the same thing. "War is Hell, Peace is Heavenly."



The two participants show from "A Time For Reason", an ecumenical youth talk show broadcast Sundays at 9:30 a.m. by KGW-TV (Channel 8), include: (left to right) Jan E. Davis, Senior at Adams High School and member of Mallory Avenue Christian Church, and Paul Andrew Marshall, Junior at John Adams High School. The series is presented by KGW-TV in cooperation with the Youth Concerns Commission of The Greater Portland Council of Churches. (Photo by Gary M. Chambers)

Ecumenical show features students

Eighteen youths of the Portland area are participating in the ecumenical talk show now being viewed on Sundays, at 9:30 a.m. on KGW-TV (Channel 8). Now in its eleventh year, "A Time For Reason" television series is co-sponsored by KGW-TV Public Service Department and the Youth Concerns Commission of the Greater Portland Council of Churches. Bringing together senior high youth and adult moderators, the thrust of this five month series is toward highlighting ethical and moral judgments that young people face constantly today. Begun initially toward local church class discussion stimulus, its effectiveness has broadened to include individuals and groups of the non-churches and church of all ages in the station's viewing band.

By consideration of some self chosen weekly topics, new edges of understanding are reached by panelists and viewers alike. Sample subjects of future shows include: "The Decline and Fall of Superman", "National Priorities: What Comes First?" and "What is Education?". Joining weekly with alternating three panel groups is one of these Moderators:

Donald J. Barrett, Mallory Avenue Christian Church and Dean of Freshmen and Sophomore students at Jefferson High School; Sister Judith M. Iwen, St. Thomas Moore Parish and teacher of religion and French at St. Mary's Academy; and Dr. Paul S. Wright, First Presbyterian Church. Production direction is given by the 1973 program chairman, Casey Crookham, Grant High School Senior from Rose City Park Presby-

terian Church; Robert H. Jackson, KGW-TV Public Service Director; and Jeff Edwards, Promotion coordinator, junior at Clackamas High School; and member of Lynwood Christian Church. Audience participation and evaluation is encouraged and appreciated. Address your comments to the Youth Concerns Commission of the Greater Portland Council of Churches or the Public Service Department of KGW-TV.

Zest of Life

Carnegie 'Happy' Pullen

Many Christians are like the little boy who was playing on top of the roof of his house. He suddenly slipped, lost his footing and began sliding down the steep roof. He instantly shouted out, "O God, save me, save me - never mind, God, I caught on a nail," he added.

So many Christians do not recognize the great and small incidents; the good things of their lives, if they are responsive to the leading of God's Spirit; and the evil things of their lives if they are contrary and disobedient of Christ's commands and instructions; and the hands of God working in their lives to chastise, to instruct, and to save. Many blunder through life and never learn the lessons that were meant for them.

Why the sudden world wide interest in astrology? So many famous persons, movie stars, industrialists, as well as members of the Liberated Generation are deeply devoted and engrossed in the various aspects of Astrology. Why?

Astrology has become so popular among both Christians and non-Christians alike because so few are willing to obey Christ's whole instruction that they might have God's unmeasured blessings and miracles of absolute divine protection. They choose to disobey God and then put their trust in signs, stars and

numbers. But they cannot escape the ultimate evils that come upon them because of their disobedience.

Peter wrote: "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts." (II Pe. 1:19)

"And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them" (Daniel and his friends) "he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in the realm." (Daniel 1:20)

The Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee."

"Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." (Isaiah 47:13-14).

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Smile - God loves you

by Reverend V. Brown

God loves us and has a wonderful plan for each life. To find God, the Bible teaches these simple steps. Believe that God is. Realize that God loves you. Understand that God's love found expression in the giving of his son Jesus Christ, to die for mankind. Therefore "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (John 1:19). For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God. Therefore those that are saved are saved by the grace of God and not by their own works, but they are saved in order to do good works. Thus the riches of God's grace will be manifest for all times through His redeemed church, "His workmanship". Paul's emphasis is that salvation is of God, both in its planning and its accomplishment, and it is to His glory. Salvation is altogether of grace from first to last. The plan of salvation as originally

devised by the Savior who wrought it out for us, is the acceptance of his vicarious sacrifice in our behalf, and the faith whereby we are made partakers of his sacrifice, are all the gifts of free and sovereign grace; the foundation and the superstructure are wholly of grace.

Redemption is the central theme of the Bible. It is the crimson strand that is woven through all the Scripture. In the Pentateuch we see it in the sacrificial system, which symbolized the atoning sacrifice for sin which Christ was to make on the cross.

It seems to me that the greatest need in the world today is life; spiritual life that is given to us only through Christ. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Our greatest privilege is to come to God. Thus our sins have separated us from God,



Elder V. Brown

but God so loves us that he gives us this privilege. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). When God forgives and saves a sinner, he does not give him a suspended sentence or parole him on good behavior, but grants him a full and complete pardon.

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Reverend Thomas L. Strayhand, Minister



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Hotline Northeast is a telephone service for people in Northeast Portland to receive emergency help, information, and personal counseling. The hotline is open during hours when most city agencies are closed. We answer calls during the following hours:
Monday - Thursday 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday 5 p.m. - 1 a.m.
Saturday 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.
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Call 288-9145 for help. Hotline Northeast is actively seeking community people to train and serve as volunteers for the hotline. Contact Joyce Pedersen, volunteer coordinator for further information.

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