American Way of War/New England Way of War - Enduring Legacies of the Puritan Militia in the American Military Construct

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American Way of War/New England Way of War - Enduring Legacies of the Puritan Militia in the American Military Construct

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A Thesis in the Field of History
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies
Harvard University
March 2018
Abstract

Long since Jonathan Winthrop’s “City on a Hill” address to the Puritan colonists departing for the Massachusetts Bay Colony many Americans remain adamant in their conviction that the United States has a pre-ordained purpose to fulfill in the global community. While struggling at times to define the sense of identity that drives them, particularly so in the early decades of the twenty-first century, Americans have found a sense of continuity and tradition in their armed forces. It is striking to note that today’s American military leaders believe that certain virtues in the American legacy are an effective weapon in the effort to counter radical ideologies and defeat those who are oppositional to and pose a threat to the basic values of the American Way (democracy, rule of law, religious freedoms, industriousness and a potent sense of public virtue). This declaration in ensconced in recent Army doctrine implies that the United States has a definable past and enduring identity that has a tangible effect on the manner in which America applies its combat power to achieve national objectives.

Of all of Britain’s North American colonies, those with the most clearly developed sense of identity were the residents of New England. For many years, the only military force Americans knew was the Old English militia system. Indeed, until the advent of the Puritan New Model Army, even Britain itself had no professional standing army (which Parliament insisted was a sign of Crown oppression). Consequently, much of America’s earliest sense of self-identity was rooted in the faith practices and belief systems of the earliest Separatist and Puritan founders of both the Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay colonies. It was a consequence of these belief systems that led
directly to the American Revolution and the establishment of independent United States. While Puritanism encompassed a number of distinct theological and sociological beliefs and practices, prima facie, warfighting was not one of their hallmark characteristics. Indeed, the result of early modern Protestant enlightenment thought, theirs was a contemplative, community driven movement with ministers who were thoroughly educated in the best scholarly institutions of the day (as indicated by the early establishment of several Puritan institutions of higher learning including Harvard, Princeton and Yale universities). However, their emphasis on certain biblical themes, including those which identified all believers as “warriors,” combined with their new-world experience served as the catalyst for what was to become an essential part of the American way of war.

Just as prominent historians have highlighted certain enduring cultural and material links with America’s British colonial past, so too can the hallmark characteristics of Puritanism be found in America’s national institutions, perhaps most evident in the customs and traditions of America’s senior service, the United States Army. As a relatively “new” entity among the nations of the world with few long-standing traditional institutions, many Americans may find a particularly sense of identity in the Army and their military forces in general. The unique circumstances of the founding and on-going service of the one-time Massachusetts Bay Colony Militia - now the “Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard” - serve as a national touchstone for the American military identity.

Certain elements of the mindset of their founders, apparent in the literal and spiritual descendants of the Puritans, have endured in the national psyche and are evident in the way Americans view the world and apply their military power today. To be certain,
most substantial world military organizations also find their identity in a historical context. However, because the United States is uniquely influenced by its Puritan past, so too is its military. While America has been influenced and strengthened by many great faith traditions (and healthy skepticism as well), the positive contributions of its Puritan past give it a distinct world outlook of which Americans of all backgrounds partake in some degree. Some contemporary sociologists and historians tend to disregard or denigrate the nature of its national origins and founding; regardless, America today is yet closely aligned with and shares many of the same global purposes and threats as her parent nation, Great Britain. Strategists and policy makers debate the degree to which the US military should be employed as either a warfighting combat force or as a tool for nation building and dissemination of the ideology known as the American Way. Regardless of perspective, the critical elements of the Puritan mindset have persisted and have combined to create an “American Way/New England Way” of warfare that significantly contributes to the unique place in the world that America maintains.
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I

Introduction

“The American Way of War” and “the New England Way”

Since the conclusion of the Second World War, the American armed forces have been recognized as among the most powerful if not the premier military organization in the world. As a highly developed professional organization, each of the armed services routinely creates and issues strategic planning guidance documents which gives structure and focus to the force and offer an insight to the American military mind. The mastery of leadership as a science is a notable hallmark of the US military, more so than in most organizations. It is with great care that leadership doctrine is developed and promulgated by the “gatekeepers,” the upper echelons of the Army officer corps who are weaned on the historical examples of Washington, Lee and Jackson, Sherman, Pershing, Patton, Eisenhower and MacArthur. In a remarkable statement, the 2010 edition of “The Army Leadership Development Strategy” declares that:

Our enemies—regular and irregular—will be well armed, well trained, well equipped, and often ideologically inspired. We must overmatch their training with our training and with the development of our leaders. We must counter their ideologies with our history and with a sustained commitment to our values.¹

The national military strategy and its related planning documents typically treat the political and economic mechanics that are attendant to the art of war in a generally

clinical and perfunctory manner. What would seem to be a rather unusual departure to this practice in fact addresses an intangible yet critically important element of waging war—the will of the American soldiery (individually and collectively) to serve and fight. It is a motivation which is forged in part on a shared and powerful heritage of service and sense of mission in the world unique in many ways to the United States and attributable, in part, to the distinctive circumstances of our foundational experiences in New England.

American military planners’ references to “our history” speak to a critical yet intangible component of our national identity; that sense of national character that grounds us and helps guide our decision making. Due to the relatively young age of the country or perhaps the idealistic motivations that underlay its foundation, there is a ceaseless struggle about the nature of American identity and the core elements of our historical narrative. Indeed, history as a topic is a critical element in the formation of the American military mindset and is replete throughout the Army educational experience. The entire second of year of “Military Science” of the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), which produces the bulk of the Army officer corps, is an in-depth survey of American military history. As with any topic of study, some will arrive at different conclusions or interpretations of facts based on their own values or generational experiences. However, just as in the physical sciences, military professionals seek to objectively identify patterns and defining characteristics in the national narrative.

Speaking to this point, Maurice Matloff of the US Army’s “Center for Military History” notes that:

 Historians . . . select and cull the records and describe, narrate, or interpret the facts in patterns and priorities that seem significant to them rather than to the contemporaries of the events or the actors themselves. While the historian seeks the truth, in human affairs truth is relative, limited by the available materials and
filtered through the spectacles with which the scholar views happenings of the past.”  

While the military experience has many commonalities across the world and throughout history, it is my contention that certain elements unique to the American military experience and the American way of war do persist and they persist to the extent that military planners purposefully explicate this concept as crucial to the on-going success of the American military presence in the world.

To what extent Americans should be engaged in global and is a matter of on-going debate but for many it is a moral obligation that stems from America’s Puritan “city on a hill” imperative. From Jonathan Winthrop to Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama, American leaders have repeatedly affirmed this point of commonality in America’s international relations. Whatever the reasons, as the “gatekeepers” of American military tradition and, in a sense, the purveyors as well as the benefactors of our national values, Army leaders have determined that our traditions are of exceptional importance in fulfilling America’s responsibility to the world. The conflict (or on-going conflicts and threats) to which they refer has been deemed a “war on terror,” the result of an inevitable “clash of civilizations” or as an unabashed effort to extend American economic dominance and political hegemony. Since the conclusion of the Second World War and the demise of traditional world powers, America has become increasingly globally engaged. For many Americans, it is an engagement that goes far beyond motives for commercial or favorable trade relations (although to be sure they are undeniably potent factors), and is a commitment to causes of cosmological significance. In his classic

The text, *The American Way of War*, premier military historian and strategy analyst Russell Weigley notes that:

> During the Cold War and especially after the Korean War, the belief that the Unites States was involved in a protracted conflict with international Communism lead to a departure from historic habits and to an effort to form a national strategy for the employment of American power in defense and promotion of the country’s political value and interests.  

Weigley’s expansive work goes on to trace the major elements of America’s military engagements through the time of his writing in 1973 and the thoughts and policies of the key leaders behind the development and formulation of American military strategy. It was a chain of these global events that resulted in the Second World War and its aftermath allowing for America’s rise to the status of a global super power with numerous impact on the world (largely for better and occasionally for worse). It is a phenomenon fully anticipated by the Puritans although perhaps far beyond the scope of anything they had imagined or which they might have approved for, unfortunately, that influence includes a number of exports from America’s entertainment industry (which has little positive regard for anything Puritan) that have appalled many cultures and often engendered bitter enmity against America.

But while capably compiling the material and academic aspects of what eventually came to be known as the national military strategy, this form of historical recounting provides little in reference to the nature of the American’s themselves that drove these decisions. Yale University Sociology and American Studies professor, Kai Erikson, addresses this issue in his seminal *Wayward Puritans* noting that it is often difficult to differentiate between a historical approach and a sociological approach to a

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subject. The standard historical approach may lack dimension and depth because
“written history … describes events far more systematically than they were originally
experienced.” This clinical recounting alone is even more deficient when it comes to
considering the Puritan mindset because:

\[\ldots\text{we are likely to misunderstand the underlying strength of Puritanism in its}
\text{early days if we look too narrowly at its formal structure and overlook its}
\text{subjective appeal. Puritanism in England was a deep religious mood before it}
became a creed or platform} \ldots\text{When we talk about Puritanism in the years before the [English] Civil Wars, then, we are discussing an emotional tone as well as a}
\text{body of theory, an ideological stance as well as a political program} \ldots^4
\]

Puritanism was, as it is now in its Evangelical progeny, an intensely emotive faith. That
emotive quality continues to be a factor in the mindset of a significant number of
American military leaders and in the ranks.

It may be argued, therefore, that the “American Way of War” encompasses far
more than a dryly clinical recounting of the assembly, training, equipping and
employment of armed forces in various military campaigns. It is the underlying thought
processes and moral motivations of influential American leaders and the people at large
that complete the picture of “the American Way of War.” While Americans conduct
preparations for conflict in accordance with the theorems of the science of war,
particularly in the twenty-first century as the American military has fully transitioned
from a purely militia construct to a profession based approach, this is only part of their
military story. It is the belief systems and the early cultural background of the Soldiers
and leaders (and the citizenry behind it) which make the American way of war truly

\[^4\text{Kai T. Erikson, Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance (New}
\text{York: Wiley & Sons, 1966) ix-x; 43-44.}\]
unique. My contention is that the “American way of war” is due in part to some of the enduring influences of the “New England Way” of the Puritans.

To most readily understand the American military mind one must look to the potent elements of that unique history which are found in the narrative of the founding of the New England colonies. While the Separatists and Puritans saw it as a “habitation in the wilderness” they certainly did not see it as a hiding spot. Winthrop wanted to believe that whatever happened in time, this settlement of spiritually motivated Britons would grow and eventually make a significant impact on the world at large. By contrast, the leadership of the Virginia Company of London (the oldest permanent colony in northern America by thirteen years) generally focused on material profit and the general expansion of the realm.

But the imperatives of the “New England Way” served to first to generate collective associations in the northern colonies and eventually to drive towards a union of all the English speaking colonies. The transition from a regional, spiritually dominated mindset to a new national perspective altered but did not at all eliminate these significant underlying patterns of belief. The tenets of the New England Way were essentially transitioned into the establishment of what has become the “American Way.” And it is this Puritan-inspired American way, now existing in many variations and conflicting versions, that still impels America to engage globally and serves to define the nature of that engagement today. Like the Puritan faith system, it encompasses both an emphasis on individual sense of responsibility and a corporate “commonwealth” mentality which is, in effect, the New England way demonstrated in the American way.
America does not hold a dominant position in the global hierarchy simply because of its wealth of natural resources, its formidable array of technology (military and otherwise) or its extensive commercial enterprises. The cataclysmic events of the First and Second World Wars and the employment of the United States’ vast material and manpower resources on behalf of the Allies were certainly contributing factors that propelled America to the center of the global stage as the predominant international super power. But material contributions and superior technology alone cannot account for the favorable esteem (for the most part) in which America and the Americans were held for so many decades.

To some degree, Americans had been welcomed in many parts of the post war world as the arbiter of justice and bringer of material and social good. It is significant to note that assuming this interventional role in the affairs of nations across the globe fits very well and may be directly attributed to the “greater purpose” mindset of many the nations’ founders. That Americans still wholeheartedly embrace this concept, and perhaps so in a particularly military sense, is visibly demonstrated by the 2014 US Navy television recruiting campaign which boldly proclaims “the US Navy – A Global Force for Good!”

The message has morphed from the proclamation of a sacred gospel from the America’s early days to that of a civic “gospel of democracy” and “right living” exemplified in the vaunted “American Way of Life.” In the early New England experience the concern was to spread the “life-giving” message of liberty in Christ via the

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vibrant example of communities of faith to serve as a global example by establishing the “city on the hill” – a foundational statement in Governor Winthrop’s 1630 address to the Bay Colony settlers aboard the Arabella in which he alludes to Christ’s proclamation in Matthew 5:14, that "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden"). Some four hundred years later, while retaining its sacred import to millions of Puritan/evangelical descendants, that message has since been remodeled/re-invented in the broader context of American civic-religion which encourages the spreading of the “gospel” of democracy and of the superlative value of the American way of life.

It is no accident that the descendants of the Puritans were among the first to deliberately equip and supply missionary outreach efforts to other people groups and nations around the globe. For example, the dominant building in the old capitol of the kingdom of the Hawaiian Islands is none other than a white steepled, New England Congregational Church. Similarly, a primary means of promoting American thought and influence across the globe are the United States “military missions” (an intriguing choice of terminology) that export training teams to numerous countries around the globe. They serve as global ambassadors of not just tactical doctrine but of values that Americans believe should be shared by all nations and at the least, a means of meaningful dialogue. While some proponents of exceptionalism believe that America stands alone, seasoned diplomats and military leaders know that their success in waging wars internationally was not accomplished in a vacuum but due in great part to the favorable view many nations already held of the Americans and what is—for lack of a better term—the American way.

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Ultimately, even those enemy belligerents who were so vigorously opposed came to laud the American way and adopt many of its tenets.

That there is a strong connection with the American political/cultural right and the military is manifest; that the right has been markedly influenced by the American evangelicals is evident as well. This close association with military prowess and traditional evangelical faith is a matter of puzzlement for some even among our Western allies. For example, how can men of war become chaplains (for example those converting from Infantry, Artillery or other combat arms branch to the Chaplaincy Corps)? Why would faith leaders so readily align themselves with pro-military political conservatives or even better, why do so many military conservatives find themselves comfortable in evangelical churches (conservative Roman Catholics, Jews and other faith groups notwithstanding)? This is by no means to be construed to say that all evangelical/Puritans ascribe to the tenets of the American right, only that there is a decidedly strong relationship between the two.

A critical societal element of the New England Way is the manner in which America’s military forces should be formed and employed. America’s premier envoy to the Europe during the Revolution, John Adams, made this abundantly clear. As the long conflict finally came to a successful conclusion for American arms, Adams provided specific input for the multiple French philosophers and historians seeking to understand the forces that contributed to the astonishing birth of the new American republic. After carefully considering the milieu of events that resulted in the dramatic and entirely unprecedented appearance of a new republic, he unequivocally identified that the unique militia construct was an essential part of that which set America apart and had which had
been a fundamental part of the their experience since the Puritans first founded their colonies:

But as the Controversy and the War began in the Massachusetts Bay, the principal Province of New England, their Institutions had the first operation. Four of those Institutions, Should be Studied and fully examined by any one, who would write with any Intelligence upon the Subject because they produced the decisive Effect, not only by the first decisions of the Controversy in publick Councils, and the first determinations to resist in Arms, but by Influencing the Minds of the other Colonies to follow their Example and to adopt, in a greater or less degree the Same Institutions and Similar Measures. The four Institutions intended are, 1. the Towns. 2. The Churches. 3. The Schools. and 4. the Militia.....Thus, Sir you have a Brief Sketch of the four Principal Sources of that Wisdom in Council, and that skill and Bravery in War, which have produced the American Revolution and which I hope will be Sacredly preserved as the foundations of a free, happy and prosperous People.7

Adams notes that these four critical factors were all inter-related to produce a unique and powerful influence. In essence, it is the “New England Way” becoming “the American Way.”

An essential question to address then is “what happened to the Puritan way in America?” or for that matter, in England as well. Given the potency of its impact, why did it not survive in its nascent form? In general, we most readily find these practices evident in continuities of religious practice, cultural norms, and in the nature of the American civil-military construct as follows. Change is inevitable but certain legacies, central to the basic American mindset endure. Through the centuries, the core of the Puritan belief system, having dimmed from its original dogmatism in New England, shifted to the South and finds its most vibrant legacy holders in the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterians groups that dominate that region. It is those faith groups that project an

unusual degree of influence in the modern military in both its leadership and in the masses of troops in the ranks.

So too, the militia construct persisted in American alongside a largely neglected Regular Army that expanded and collapsed based on the national exigencies but at its core was continually driven by a group of dedicated professionals. This state of affairs continued even after the First World War until the global demands of the Second World War forced a dramatic transformation into a truly professional standing force. Together, the citizen-soldiers of the National Guard nee militia and those serving in the full time forces compose the heart of the American military. One of the earliest philosophers of the new military professionalism, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington, captures the relationship between faith and military service and reflects almost expressly the same fundamental agencies that John Adams was so fond of promoting as essential to the American experience. In his classic *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, he clarifies the American military identity by contrasting the sacred grounds of the US Military Academy at West Point with the average American existence typified by the town of Highland Falls, NY, just outside the Academy gates:

> West Point is a community of structured purpose, one in which the behavior of men is governed by a code, the product of generations. There is little room for presumption and individualism . . . The spirit of West Point is in the great grey Gothic Chapel, starting from the hill and dominating The Plain...But the unity of the Chapel is even greater. There join together the four great pillars of society: Army, Government, College, and Church [militia, town meeting, schools, church]. Religion subordinates man to God for divine purposes; the military life subordinates man to duty for society’s purposes. In its severity, regularity, discipline, the military society shares the characteristics of the religious order. Modern man may well find his monastery in the Army.\(^8\)

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There are those that would say that Huntington’s thoughts are nothing more than typical unimaginative conservative rhetoric, perhaps reflecting a frightening conservatism. In his discourse, Huntington celebrates both the civil society and the uniqueness (short-comings and all) of its accompanying military society that dwells within it.

But Huntington makes no amends; it is this disciplined and structured institution (perhaps along with our other first entity, the US Congress) that continues to provide a future for American viability; a viability based on the strength of their history. For many modern Americans, their understanding of history is that the Puritan’s planted themselves in Massachusetts, thrived for a number of years and then largely ceased to exist. Yet the enduring legacies of the US military, extremely reliant on its history and traditions for its vitality, daily show the warp and weave of a living Puritanism in the fabric of their existence and in the larger American society that sustains them.
Definition of Terms and Themes

**Calling** – a temporary or permanent divinely ordained role/lifestyle that provides every believer with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the greater order

**Covenant** – an agreement between God and man or between parties that solemnly binds one to the other for the purpose of betterment or right ordering of one or the other

**Elect** – from the Greek “ekektos” meaning to be chosen or selected; a focus of 16th century Calvinism which maintains that the only true Christians are those who experience a regenerative spiritual conversion as predestined/foreknown by God

**Freeman** – a legal state of being in England and particularly in America for those not bound as a servant, slave or with a criminal past and in which one was endowed with particular rights to include voting (in general), serving in the militia and holding office

**Evangelical** – ideological descendants of the Calvinistic faith paradigms

**Material impact of faith/ideology** - as reflected in badges, flags, and emblems

**Martial motivation** - Why soldiers serve and fight; the concept of “selfless service”

**Morality and warfare** – what are the foundational constructs inherited from the early church fathers, etc. that influenced European societies, and was there a unique Puritan interpretation of the same?

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer, leadership positions that enforce discipline and apply front line leadership in the enlisted ranks that parallels that of the officer corps throughout. NCOs are considered to be the “backbone of the Army”

Puritan – a Christian community composed primarily of Englishmen who sought (nominally) to remain within the Anglican Church and purify it from what they considered to be non-scriptural traditions and unnecessary accretions that were not part of the early church

Religion and military service – how Puritans felt about the military in general and as it developed in Britain and America (concepts of mercy, valuation of human life, etc.)

ROE – Rules of Engagement – guidance from a command authority in regards to what levels of force or actions are authorized in combat

Transformation – the demise and transformation of the Puritan ideology in society and the militia; the restructuring of the militia system and the advent of a professional standing army

*Note: While the Pilgrims and other dissenters were familiar with the Geneva Bible, scriptural references here are provide from the “authorized” or “King James” version of the Bible, published in 1611, the scriptures of the Anglican communion which many non-separatist Puritans would have utilized.

**Note: In accordance with current standard military practice, the first letter of the word “Soldier” is in always in upper case text as is the word “Veteran.”
The Puritan Way in New England

America’s defining military experience began in the early seventeenth century via the profoundly unique “experiment” in religious idealism that was the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It is extremely compelling that upon his departure from England with the first large group of emigrants, the colony’s governor, Jonathan Winthrop, implored them to consider the venture in biblical terms as a “city on a hill,” highly visible to all. Winthrop clearly believed this to be an unprecedented venture, very much an experiment in governance and “right living” on a grand scale with the entire world looking on. He and his fellow Puritans calculated that they would succeed based on adherence to closely held theological and societal assumptions that they believed would lead to a successful and prosperous society that would fulfill God’s ideal for human society as much as could be possible in the imperfect material world. These fundamental beliefs included an authentic, emotive faith based on an individual conversion experience, zealous observance of biblical standards in daily life, and in secular matters focusing the collective effort of all towards building a “Common Wealth” community dedicated to preserving what they believed to be the traditional rights of Englishmen in an equitable and righteous system of governance. They believed themselves to be a remnant of true believers who were purists, devoted to reviving and carrying on the practices of the original early Church in the midst of a nominally “Christian” world lost in meaningless liturgical and superstitious practices. They were the “elect” of God (in New Testament terms), who gained this status, not by their own efforts or merits, but who were pre-
selected by His inscrutable will to receive eternal salvation as a free gift of grace through faith alone. There were no amount of self-effort, number of good deeds, or depth of religious zealousness or piety that could gain God’s grace; man’s good works, in terms of individual salvation, counted for nothing. Only a final acceptance of grace, repentance and complete surrender of will was efficacious for salvation. Their election meant that they were members of a unique, separate community of a heavenly kingdom that was in constant conflict with a world that had come to be dominated by the forces of darkness; that Christ’s return was imminent and until then, they to be a force of light in the world. As such, there is a distinctively militant (and even “military”) tone evident throughout their dogma and in their practices of living the authentic Christian life. Whether one finds Edward’s choice of words to be self-righteous, hypocritical or sincere, he and his compatriots ardently believed that the Bay Colony was to be far more than a capitalistic scheme. It was precisely this sense of purpose, this emphasis on transcendent matters that marked the Bay Colony/New England experience apart from that of the Virginia Company or other colonial adventures.

Just as select elements of New England’s material culture can be readily linked to the East Anglian origins of its Puritan settlers (much of which remains evident despite the passage of time as David Hackett Fischer demonstrates in Albion’s Seed: Four English Folkways in America), substantial elements of the US national character can be readily linked to the influence wielded by New England’s core societal institutions such as the church, militia, and town halls. Consequently, identifiable traces of the Puritan mindset can be found in the institutions, policies, and practices of America’s armed forces today.

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9 David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) et al.
In addition, as a “living entity,” the military’s legacy is also passed on from generation to generation of its leaders. Codifying essentially intangible elements such as “values,” “norms,” and “spirituality” makes the task more challenging. But with a comprehensive study of the American experience with war will reveal that there are identifiable and enduring legacies from the Puritan era.

We can begin to develop an understanding of the American military legacy and its Puritan foundations by considering it in the light of its Anglo parentage both in the colonial age and in the modern era. Additionally, we can gain insight by comparing the American way of war with the heritage and practices of some the world’s prominent military organizations. In both these contexts, the policies, practices and institutions unique to these organizations will be considered, both in stated aims and in actual practice. Additionally, military policy statements, accounts of the common soldiery, and anecdotes from friend and foe alike will be used to capture essential elements of the New England military mind.

As with any experiment, there are failures, negative findings, false leads and the occasional break through or solid confirmation of a hypothesis. And as John Adams testified in the early years of the Republic, in tribute to the success of the Puritan experiment, declared that New England’s thriving communities were distinguished for their churches, schools, town meetings and . . . their militia system (all of which existed in some form in the Old World but found new forms and purpose in America). The task then is to define the unique characteristics of the Bay Colony militia, examine how and why it transformed and identify those enduring legacies of the early New England military experience (particularly in regard to matters of the militia construct) that persist
and empower American military culture today. The answers to these questions serve to confirm significant links to the past and affirm the sense of continuity that is so vital to a dynamic and professional military force. They should inform future generations of soldiers as to the value of “the American way of life” for which they must be prepared to offer the ultimate sacrifice. They should serve to empower our current generation of American warriors and leaders by confirming a strong sense of identity and purpose derived from the best of America’s historical narrative and tempered by the knowledge of our short-comings and failures as well. And, they should lead Americans to re-affirm who they are as a national entity and determine the way they should comport ourselves as they exercise power in the global community.

The Puritans shared the fundamentals of the Christian faith that accorded with orthodoxy as defined by the predominant ecclesiastical bodies in their time (Orthodox, Roman Catholic and the burgeoning Protestant movements). These included an acceptance of the body of scripture as divinely inspired, and belief in the virgin birth, sinless life and literal death and bodily resurrection of Christ as explicated by the ecumenical council that met at Nicaea in Asia Minor in the seventh Century and resulting in the commonly used creed by that name. As a product of the Protestant reformation on the European continent, they shared many features with their mainland brethren while yet maintaining their commitment to and pride in being Englishmen and Scotsmen; heirs to a vibrant constitutional form of government that shared power with the monarchy. While Henry the VIII’s “reformation” was an occasioned of convenience to accommodate his marital state disapproved of by the papacy, it created a genuinely reformed ecclesiastical environment that allowed for a far more genuine New Testament
faith experience (as the Puritans deemed it) on a local, congregational level. Interestingly, their shared crown/parliamentary government mirrored, in some degree, the theological and temporal constructs of their existence in the New World. For their baseline cosmology rested on the concept of God who ruled as “king” and sovereign while the practice of their faith played out in a decidedly democratic manner, guided in part by the self-governance of the early church that they read and whole heartedly embraced from the scriptures.

Puritan Covenants and Spiritual Exclusivism

A common perception of the English Puritans is that they were an exclusivist group, rigid in their demeanor and intolerant of those of divergent or dissenting groups, arrogant to the point of daring to call themselves “the people of God.” Yet, Puritans shared a common core of a biblically based faith and were linked to a multitude of like-minded dissenting believers across the western world. Unlike the Roman Catholics, they did not demand church membership in their community as a requirement for salvation. Indeed, formal affiliation with a congregation had nothing to do with salvation but was simply the next logical action to be taken as the result of that experience.

One misperception of Puritan beliefs, perpetuated even by some of the most capable colonial historians, suggests that they lived in a perpetual state of fear of the appearance of any sin or presence of evil. It was not sin, in fact, that they feared, but the resulting separation from fellowship with God and the peace and blessings that were a
result of that relationship. Another misconception is the supposed superiority and elitism of the Puritan “elect” who ruled with an iron fist and whose intent was to crush all opposition to their close minded system of belief. In reality, strict Calvinism was really not much more than an emphasis and recitation of the multiple New Testament texts which manifestly refer to believers as those who, in God’s sovereignty, were “pre-ordained” for salvation; that in his omniscience, God already knew the identity of those who would eventually choose to enter a covenant relationship with him and be saved (the extent of “free will” in salvation and the “Arminian” controversy being a topic for another discussion). Thus, the term “election” did not imply that the Puritan believer was particularly worthy of salvation or innately superior in any way (before or after salvation). It did imply that there was a proper way to live as God intended in the world and the truth of the Christian gospel was viewed as a liberating message that freed human kind from the bondage of sin to pursue this liberty. The ensuing Puritan experiment was an attempt to practice a standard of communal right living on a grand scale that many of their ideological descendants in America (and other nations) seek to observe to this day.

As Erikson notes, believers were those who:

...learned of their appointment through the agency of a deep conversion experience, giving them a special responsibility and a special competence to control the destinies of others. People who had never been touched by this moment of grace...were simply not qualified to teach the truth or share in the government of men. [particularly in the Bay Colony]¹¹

Erikson rightly alludes to the resulting conviction of believing communities that they had “a special responsibility” to bring this lifestyle to others. It is this Puritan impulse that

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¹¹ Erikson, Wayward Puritans, 48.
remains at work in the American conscience to this day and is responsible, in part, for American interventionism (military and otherwise) in other societies.

The personal faith relationship, characteristic of Puritanism, was not only towards God but extended to the entire community of faith with whom the redeemed was to bind his/her life in a solemn covenant. Scholars Timothy Breen and Stephen Foster note the critically unique culture that developed as the result of inter-relating personal faith with corporate responsibility, a covenant that was entered into freely and with an open mind and heart:

Winthrop and the other Puritans who moved to Massachusetts assumed that the Lord had made a covenant with them as He had once done for the people of England. This initial "national Covenant" was followed by a proliferation of other covenants on every level of life in New England. The Massachusetts Puritans organized churches, towns, indeed, the entire commonwealth upon the contractual model. The essential ingredient in this contract was free will: the individual voluntarily promised to obey civil and scriptural law, for the seventeenth-century Puritans believed that meaningful obedience could only grow out of voluntary consent, never out of coercion... The strong sense of communal responsibility that developed out of this voluntary commitment influenced the character of conflict within the Bay Colony. It was incumbent upon all men to work out their disputes as peacefully as possible, thinking always of their greater obligation to the commonwealth as a whole and ultimately to God himself.12

This way of life placed full responsibility on the individual to take part of his own volition. Voluntary “free-will” association seemed at odds with the strong Calvinistic stance that God had already determined who would and would not be saved. But the turmoil of the “Arminian” controversy, as it came to be known, about the role of free will in salvation, did not materially alter the fact that a redeemed person had a stringent responsibility to act in a corporate manner. While some later Americans, notably the

Transcendentalists, revolted against this intensive involvement by the community in an individual’s every day affairs, the Puritans of the time found the comfort and strength occasioned by membership in a nurturing community to be genuinely liberating.

Likewise, because the New Testament referred to the church as the redeemed people of God rather than a physical building, the Puritans were determined to call their gathering places a “Meeting House” where the church could fellowship regularly. The concept of “gathering with the church” is still a point of distinction particularly in the American south. The “people of God” who made up the “church” were therefore, were those who claimed this rejuvenating experience by faith alone, based on scripture alone (“sola scriptura”) and might be or might not be formally affiliated with any organized denominational group. And if the Puritans were being exclusivist then they were likely only reflecting what Christ had taught: “Enter ye in at the strait [narrow] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (“few” being the operative term here).13

Consequently, Puritan exclusivism has tended to be a grossly exaggerated and poorly translated concept. The Puritans drew on and emphasized those traditional elements from their Judaic heritage that proclaimed that God has “a people” and that He has a specific purpose for them in history. They also felt strongly, as some groups do, that England was a particularly blessed nation that was destined to serve God’s purpose in the world, thus patriotism and faith found a convenient relationship. When it became apparent that the crown and the established Anglican church would not be a partner in this expansion of right-minded Christianity (and indeed became actively oppressive)

educated and influential leaders engaged in a capitalistic venture that allowed them to physically remove themselves to the wilderness of the New World via a joint stock company where they might attempt to live in reality that which they had formulated in theory at home.\textsuperscript{14} While they were certainly “dissenters” form the dominant form of English Protestantism, they maintained a steadfast belief, or at least alluded to the idea, that they were in reality preserving the true nature of the church and therefore saw no reason to formally separate at least not for the first fifty years of their existence in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. With the final revocation of their charter, there was no more reason for pretense and the separate fellowships accepted their identity as “congregational” churches.

Prominent Yale historian Edmund Morgan addressed the difficulties some modern Americans have in identifying with or understanding their Puritan ancestors. While providing keen insights into the Puritan mind of the day, he does not always seem to appreciate the communities of his fellow Americans who rather readily identify with the Puritans as their spiritual predecessors. In his classic study of Governor John Winthrop, Morgan asserts that “We have to caricature the Puritans in order to feel comfortable in their presence . . . Their very existence is a challenge to our moral complacency . . .”\textsuperscript{15} This sense of profound disconnection is unfortunately true for much of America in this age of self-interest, iconoclasm and increasing vulgarity in the public space. Morgan notes that they challenge us today because an essential part of the Puritan experiment was not to hide in secluded compounds but to actively engage and live out

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biblical principles in the communities where they lived both in Old and New England. To illustrate this point, he provides Winthrop’s conclusions about his personal struggle to rightly order his life in which he declares that:

...that he which would have sure peace and joye in Christianiye, must not aime at a condition retyred from the world and free from temptations, but to knowe that the life which is most exercised with tryalls and temptations is the sweetest, and will prove the safeste. For such tryalls as fall within compasse of our callings, it is better to arme and withstande them than to avoide and shunne them.\(^\text{16}\)

This “head on” approach to life is something that American military professionals find particularly satisfying. Rather than stand back and watch, better to “arne” oneself and confidently enter the contest in terms somewhat reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt’s “the man in the arena” speech which praises, not the critic or the reticent, but those who strive, fail, and rise to try again.

The concept of “freedom” and “liberty” that became such common themes to later generations who championed the concept of a unique American way, find significant roots and historical precedence in the stringent rules of the early Puritan communities. By modern standards, they seem harsh and exclusionary but to the Puritans, their communal laws were very much aligned with biblical doctrine that proclaimed that man could only experience true liberty by submitting and living within divinely revealed laws and principles. Within these stringent guidelines, they yet experienced a level of self-governing and responsibility not experienced in the Old World. According to Breen and Foster, nascent democracy actually held great sway in the supposedly severely oppressive and heavy atmosphere of early New England:

Historians have often criticized the leaders of the Bay Colony for their intolerance of other men’s opinions, but when one considers Catholics fighting Protestants in colonial Maryland or the Dutch quarreling with the English in New York, one begins to understand why the Puritan fathers acted as they did. Within their

exclusive, covenanted communities the Puritans allowed relatively broad participation in civil and ecclesiastical affairs, a practice which meant that government seldom remained long at odds with its constituents. Sometimes, of course, groups were not happy about the selections that their neighbors made, but the losers rarely claimed that they had been denied a voice. Moreover, civil elections were held frequently, providing dissatisfied factions with ample opportunity to alter the character of government. 17

The communities they formed and the government they established were indeed experiments in their interpretation of what New Testament living truly required. Early foundations of a democratic mindset is notably evident in such scriptures as the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Galatia in which he admonishes them to maintain a humble spirit of service to each other regardless of station or rank in life:

> For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 18

To a remarkable degree their chosen way of life proved entirely viable as evidenced by the remarkable stability they experienced in relation to other colonies. They passed this concept, in pure and altered form, to their progeny and it finds expression in both secular and sacred life in the United States today. The modern US Army is a benefactor of this disciplined concept of liberty that preserves the value of individual freedoms within a framework of responsibility to the corporate good.

17 Breen and Foster, “The Puritans' Greatest Achievement” 10.
The advent of electronic devices with their vast array of entertainment features is but recent blip in the broad expanse of human history. Previously, entertainment and mental stimulation were provided by means of the great oral traditions of story-telling, dramatic presentations at a theater or by religious leaders in teaching sessions or, less so, as part of sacred services or rituals. The Puritans and dissenting Protestants in general had developed the “preaching” form of oral address to a fine art form combining didactic lecturing with a powerful urgency of spiritual import. The art of preaching, as it flourished in the years after the Reformation, involved an in-depth exegesis of scripture, revealing hidden treasures of insight and lessons for daily living that most people found to be quite appealing (depending on the skill of the speaker to be engaging as well). For many, it was empowering, comforting and at times exhilarating to hear in-depth messages (sometimes hours in length) from learned ministers with whom they could directly relate, often being given the opportunity to contribute to the conversation as well. This intimate interaction and dialogue was relatively unknown in most to the Christian world as the ritualized forms of worship generated by the authorized church did not accommodate it or even discourage or persecuted it.\(^{19}\) This is very much opposed to popular misconceptions Puritan ministers were stern disciplinarians who ruled imperiously and harshly (no thanks to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s misrepresentations). Morgan notes that this was not all the case.

\(^{19}\) Ziff, *Puritanism In America*, 53.
and that, for example, in regards to instructing children New England teachers and ministers were remarkably advanced "for the ministers who wrote and spoke on the subject almost always counseled their readers and listeners to win children to holiness by kindness rather than to force them to it by severity."20

Pre-eminent Puritan scholar, Perry Miller, when analyzing the core components of the Puritan construct in the New World emphasizes the criticality of worship/preaching service to the corporate success of the colony:

Puritan life, in the New England theory, was centered upon a corporate and communal ceremony, upon the oral delivery of a lecture, and the effort of the Massachusetts Bay Company to set up a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical came ultimately to the one purpose of gathering men and women together in orderly congregations that they might sit under a 'powerful' and a literate ministry, that they might hear the Word of God as well as read it, and hear it not as it was written in revelation, but as it was expounded by that ministry, refashioned into doctrines, reasons, and uses.21

This practical experience of sharing in the mysteries of the faith with the certainty of the ability to know the mind of God, added a confident and exceptionalist dimension to the New England mindset. They were active participants often called to take action in their personal lives and in the world rather than simply passive recipients of revealed truth.

Indeed one of the sources of conflict that drove Puritans to migrate was the arbitrary imposition of the Stuart crown in local congregational matters—particularly that of the right to preach and teach. Charles I compounded this affront in military affairs with an attempt to restrain and control dissenters in the community. Taking cues from his relatively unpopular father, James I, he sought to increase the power of the throne,


justifying his actions by his divinely ordained right to rule undisputedly (the maligned doctrine of the “divine right of kings”). His marriage to a French Catholic and his visible support of Roman Catholics in general was an increasing cause of alarm. Under Bishop Laud, government officials were sent throughout the kingdom and particularly into East Anglia, the heart of Puritan country where:

These men visited local congregations, broke up conventicles, and challenged respected ministers. Indeed, they attacked "popular protestantism" wherever they found it. In Hampshire angry villagers protested Laud's actions as an unwonted, dangerous, and unwelcome innovation. People in other local communities agreed. Laud's ecclesiastical officers also attempted to destroy "that ratsbane of lecturing" frequently found in the incorporated boroughs. Again, what men perceived as established local traditions were disturbed. According to one historian, when the king and his archbishop attacked the lectureships, "they were tampering not with a recent innovation but rather with an institution that in many places had been rooted in the life of the community for several generations."²²

Again, this preaching/teaching activity was nothing radically new or revolutionary. Yet the crown saw in the purifying congregations something of a potential threat and more so a distraction from Charles I desires for an entirely homogenous society that he could readily control.

According to Yale professor of American Religious History, B.R. Stout, the messages of New England Puritan ministers were amplified far beyond their immediate audiences via their mass publication and distribution throughout the colonies and in Europe. According to Stout, it is estimated that New Englanders were hearing almost two thousand messages every week; it was a phenomenally robust medium in an era of disjointed and difficult communications. Lest one underestimate the pervasive influence of these earnest appeals and dogmatic messages, the volume of their output compared to

non-religious printings was on a scale of approximately four to one.\footnote{23} This combined with their high rate of literacy contributed immeasurably to empowering New England as a decisive actor on the colonial stage.

The nature of Puritan preaching was largely exegetical as ministers delved into the nuances and textual structures to find divine templates for right living and reliable, life affirming answers for the vagaries of life in an uncertain world. Some were certainly more skilled as speakers and could hold the congregation’s attention for multiple hours while others were less successful as evidenced by the attention getting wooden rod utilized by the “tithingman” ubiquitous throughout New England churches.\footnote{24} Sermons, of course, addressed all the contexts of daily living to include the necessity and value of military service. Perhaps the most powerful and gripping forms of ministerial discourse was the “Jeremiad” which came to be a distinctive feature in New England culture. These were solemn tirades reminiscent of the prophet Jeremiah’s warnings to the people of Israel to repent and reform their ways to obtain God’s blessing and to avoid his wrath. Jeremiads were employed particularly during times of regional distress to explain unexpected calamities and disasters; to a large degree, they were tools to re-orient and re-dedicate believers in the practices of right living and remind them to approach life with a sense of humility in all their internal and external affairs.


The Baptists are the predominant enduring faith group that find their roots in and remain closely aligned in many ways with 16th century Puritanism. Early Baptist leaders (John Smyth, Thomas Helwys) were initially Puritan in theology and practice, their desire to find a more authentic “New Testament Church” experience led them to dissent from the Puritans and eventually from other Separatists particularly along the lines of infant baptism. As the group’s name implies, the matter of adult baptism by immersion as an outward symbol of an inner conversion experience was the hallmark of the Baptist sects. The matter of infant baptism, practiced by Catholics and most Protestants alike at the time, became a critical issue at the time because of the import of the symbology in baptism. True Christians were those who had experienced saving grace having consciously accepted it; baptism was the follow on action to publicly affirm what had taken place spiritually (the “death” of the old being and the “resurrection” to a new life in Christ”). As infants were necessary incapable of making this decision, they would not be eligible for baptism which was also a requirement of membership in a congregation (as it remains to this day). This was a difficult issue for the Puritans to resolve as they were loath to part with this age old practice that seemed to lend a sanctity and continuity to families in the community. However, the purity of the true church demanded that one must show the signs of conversion and new birth before admittance for membership and simple infant baptism in no ways met that requirement. The resulting “half-way covenant” was an accommodation allowed members of the community to participate in church life but the concept only partially resolved the matter. Ultimately, in their desire
to return to the practices of the early church, many determined to follow the model of baptism only for those of a consenting age thus maintaining the purity of the church. Of all the dissenting Puritan groups that found their way to New England, perhaps the most closely related and proliferating were the Baptists. In particular, today's Southern Baptist Convention, one of most conservative branches of these evangelical faith groups, comprises the largest Protestant denomination in North America.

As with many Puritan root groups, dissent from the established religious order that ruled in conjunction with the state was an inevitable course of action and a hallmark of their faith. The idea of “breaking” meant a departure from the comfort and stability of familiar daily life and treading new and potentially dangerous territory. While most expressed no desire to destroy the fabric of society nor to be considered radical reformists, dissenters (those who were actually determined to separate and those who desired to remain in fellowship and purify from within) faced the threat of being socially and physically persecuted by means ranging from rejection from communal life, lengthy imprisonment and potentially an excruciating death. What seems today a rather mundane matter of religious practice was a dramatically bold action in Europe’s extremely hierarchical and authoritarian post-medieval world. Yet, while dissent implied a break from the established order it was not a departure into anarchy but in the company of and under the authority of other “true believers.”

The Baptists serve as a fully developed example of the relational and individualistic mode of spirituality that was a hallmark of these Protestant faith groups. While they shared the criteria of personal conversion via faith alone and governance by local congregations with their Puritan predecessors, they diverged in regards to some
closely held Calvinist tenets and more importantly in regards as to how the church (the body of believers) should relate to the established government. For Thomas Hewlys, the wealthy and learned Puritan leader turned Baptist, the government should have no role in the administration of the church nor should the church collude with secular powers in the enforcement of spiritual orthodoxy. This was a division in authority that the leaders of the Bay Colony were not willing to accept and it was a marked point of departure between the groups. As Baptist church historian C. Douglas Weaver notes:

For Hewlys and early Baptists, individual freedom of conscience was indispensable. Individual believers must have the right to choose their religious beliefs “seeing they only must stand before the judgment seat of God to answer for themselves.” This focus on conscience was not a rabid individualism run amok, but was at the heart of what it meant to have genuine faith and be an authentic believer’s church. Dissent was tied to fidelity to God.25

The importance of right government and acceptance of temporal power was essential to the Puritan/Baptist mind-set, but the respect for individual expression of faith and a more welcoming attitude was far more evident in the Baptist movement.

To some degree, the Puritan experiment, on its initial grand scale, did end in 1684 with the withdrawal of the company charter by the restored Monarchy. The upheavals caused by the Civil War were felt even in the far distant American colonies but under the Cromwell protectorate, the Puritans fared well. Upon Cromwell’s death and the ensuing restoration of the Crown, Charles II began to apply an iron-grip to the former semi-autonomous state. As Breen notes:

The Puritan vision of an exclusive, covenanted society was the most obvious casualty of the revolutionary period. The revocation of the old charter in 1684 and the enforced religious toleration after that date all but destroyed any lingering

sense among the colonists that they formed a special, divinely chosen community.\textsuperscript{26}

Boston’s influential minister, Increase Mather (Cotton Mather’s father) and other Puritan leaders traveled to London to negotiate a return of the colony’s original privileges but to no lasting effect. Yet this was not at all the end of the Puritan story. Throughout its trials in regards to infant baptism and the Unitarian/Trinitarian debate, the basic belief systems and local congregations survived and continued to spread across the world in their original form and in the practices of their multiple evangelical offspring.

A sense of a return to a more authentic spiritual experience was always at the core of Puritanism. As the old Puritan hegemony passed and the colony matured in the ensuing decades, the specter of a dead, meaningless religiosity against which they had vehemently protested in in England, now threatened the core of their American experience. As Cotton Mather wrote disparagingly, New England’s vibrant and personally emotive faith construct was becoming nothing more than “the religion of pews which with a proud, vain formal people seems now to be the chief religion.” According to historian Larzer Ziff, the communal sense of a “pious” but lifeless faith practice was a step towards the colonists losing their distinctiveness as “Puritans” and assuming the identity of the New England Yankee.\textsuperscript{27}

But a powerful surge of traditional but even more emotive faith that did much to continue that early tradition was occasioned by series of religious revivals that has come to be known as “the Great Awakening.” Taking place between the 1720s and 1750s, it

\textsuperscript{26} Breen and Foster, “The Puritans' Greatest Achievement,” 17.

was but a step (although a critical one) in a series of fervent evangelical movements that shook every community in the Commonwealth and served as a chain of Puritan faith continuity throughout American history. As Ziff so capably relates, it was not the “lifeless round of thundering imprecations” of the classical “Jeremiad” (sermons used in previous generations to call for repentance and renewal) that proved so powerful. Rather it was the call to experience the old Calvinistic faith in emotive personal terms as expounded by Jonathan Edwards, the renowned pastor of the congregation in the western town of Northampton, who:

...having experienced grace and being consumed with a living sense of the beauty of the whole creation once the majesty of God was received as a sixth sense of the absolute priority of grace and the experiential joy it would confer.28

Edwards conveyed quintessential Puritanism in every message, as did many other ministers who preached in the same manner. Hell was real and yawned wide waiting to consume the lost, but God’s grace was free to all who would accept His offer of grace and the powerful life of spiritual freedom that believer would experience as a result.

Further waves of “awakenings” and revivals took place in the ensuing decades and much of the original Puritan intensity was absorbed and carried forward by more outwardly expressive groups. Former US ambassador Michael Novak and his wife Jana have written in Washington’s God that the American religious landscape was greatly transformed from the era of the Revolution until the beginning of the Second Great Awakening in the 1820 in that:

Both Quakerism [of Pennsylvania] and Puritanism presented a far more formal, stylized sort of evangelical tradition than that of the newcomers, the Baptists and Methodists who were sweeping southward through all the states. After the Second Great Awakening, the predominant form of American religion was no longer Anglican or Puritan, but Baptist and Methodist – intimate, expressive,

experiential, gregarious, friendly, extending a hand, and yet maintaining the
discipline of small, morally watchful congregations. ²⁹

A powerful shift that would forever mark American identity was taking place that
affected the old New England regions (and the areas of the Puritan diaspora across the
continent and beyond) and made a remarkably greater impact in the South. Historian
Mark Summers relates that the change had a marked impact on the future soldiers that
would fill the ranks of the Confederate armies and set the stage for its massive revivals:

The Second Great Awakening shifted the culture of Dixie, and America as a
whole. The revivals took hold in the "backcountry" amongst the yeoman.
Southern evangelism reflected the charismatic and independent character of the
Appalachian farmers. Southern yeomen declared their independence from the
staid faith of the plantation gentry. While planters dominated politics and
business, humbler folk shaped the culture of Southern Sundays. The South's
evangelical turn led to a homogenization of white yeomen. While Union soldiers
also turned to God during the Civil War, they did so in a much more hodgepodge
fashion; each regiment, each social class, each ethnicity in its own way.³⁰

Interestingly, the distinctive traits of the now dominant religious force in America, as
detailed by the Novaks, are the same ones that many foreign observers and allies would
use to describe the American troops with whom they have had occasion to interact
particularly after the extensive contact afforded by the American occupation presence in
both Europe and the Pacific rim following the conclusion of the Second World War. On
the whole, the people of nations who were jaded by years of warfare and oppressive
authoritarian governments found Americans to be refreshingly optimistic, open handed,
efficient and genuinely opposed to corruption. Americans, sometimes perceived as naïve
and un-informed, yet appeared to have a sincere good will for the welfare of their allies

²⁹ Michael Novak and Jana Novak, Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the

³⁰ Mark Summers, "The Great Harvest: Revival in the Confederate Army During
the Civil War," Accessed from The Acton Institute, https://acton.org/great-harvest-
revival-confederate-army-during-civil-war
and former enemies alike with a determined interest in the development of free
democratic societies.

The uniqueness of America and “Americanism” went far to establishing the
United States as the dominant super power in the post-war free world. And undoubtedly, much of what made and continues to make America unique is to be found in her legacy of opposition to monolithic religious authority (or any authority) while embracing fervent spirituality as a necessary pre-condition for enjoyment and maintenance of political/communal liberty under law. While there have certainly been lamentable exceptions to this model of constructive civil-military interaction, overall this model of good will, honor and trust has been a hallmark of the strong international relations that America has established via her many military missions and humanitarian efforts across the globe. While other denominations certainly add much to the America’s resilient religious fiber, Evangelicals and their Puritan forefathers are directly responsible for that emphatic spiritual component with its missionary zeal that is an undeniably distinctive feature of the American psycho-social interface. American “Christianity” and the fortunes of her largest protestant denomination, the Baptists, were largely formed in this the years of the early republic and would impact the countries religious and political landscape for years to come.

Quite steadily and dramatically, the new evangelicals were forging a new definition of what counted as “Christian” in America. In 1740 there had been only 25 Baptist houses of worship in the Congregationalist stronghold of New England, for example, but by 1790 the number had increased more than tenfold, to 266. And in Virginia alone, 218 new Baptist churches were established, in effect challenging the privileged status the Anglican Church had enjoyed for more than a century.\footnote{Michael Novak and Jana Novak, \textit{Washington’s God}, 99-100.}
At times discounted and denounced as malcontents in formerly Puritan communities, some Baptists found themselves persecuted and even imprisoned in the less passionate and more order-driven societies of the Anglican communities of Virginia. According to premier American historian Daniel Boorstin, over 50 were imprisoned before 1776 due not to theological unorthodoxy but for charges of disturbing the peace. Interestingly, he applauds what he called the “practical godliness” exhibited in the Virginia colony however it is worth noting that the conservative spirituality of that sort would never have sparked the revolution that lead to the establishment of the United States. Thanks to the eventual adoption of that commonwealth’s “Statute of Religious Freedom” (championed by Thomas Jefferson and inscribed on his tombstone at Monticello as one of his crowning achievements alongside his authorship of the Declaration of Independence), American Baptists began to expand on a dramatic scale.\textsuperscript{32}

According to historian Thomas Kidd, this unusual confluence between the worldly deists and fervent evangelicals in regards to the importance “disestablishment” between church and state served as critical factor in unifying the colonies in the face of the conflict with the mother country. Much as proto-Baptist Roger Williams was seen as a religious agitator, in defiance of the authority of the established church in Massachusetts (despite his close theological views and his lifelong fondness for his erstwhile brethren in Boston) so to was the opposition of the burgeoning Evangelical movement a motivating factor in the mindset of revolution just beginning to develop in the previously loyal colonists. As Kidd notes that the dissension ranging from the

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Baptists in New England to the Presbyterians in South Carolina had marked effect on the American popular mind:

The birth of American evangelical Christianity in the 1740s resulted in the first widespread popular uprising against established authority in the history of British colonial America, and it heavily influenced many of those who would the rank and file of the Patriot movement in the American Revolution...After some decades of state persecution for their religious beliefs, a number of Separate and Baptist evangelical leaders became convinced the union of church and state led to the corruption of both. Thus, in the era of Revolution, evangelicals, liberal Christians, and deists would find themselves cooperating in the cause of disestablishment, or the separation of church and state. 33

Thus the legacy of not only Jonathan Winthrop, John Cotton, Cotton Mather but also of their close “cousins” Hewlys and Roger Williams and Jonathan Edwards, contributed significantly to a dominating element in what eventually came to be known as “the American Way.”

Puritan Beliefs and Concepts of Military Service and Warfare

In the enlightened twenty-first century, at least in the western world, approbation of directed violence as a means of conflict resolution is tentative at best. Many struggle to understand how there could be any valid connection between the practice of religious faith and the use of armed force whatsoever. This is particularly so for modern westerners whose perception is that Christianity, with its belief in a messiah who is the “Prince of Peace,” is somewhat detached from the realities of daily life and whose adherents would have little understanding of such matters as brute combat. Yet prominent clinical psychotherapist Edward Tick, whose extensive therapeutic work with combat veterans

has led to him to publish some significant insights about the nature of warfare itself, markedly disagrees. From a primarily clinical aspect, he addresses a belief pattern about the nature of war that is deep in the American psyche in the twenty-first century but would be readily grasped by any Puritan in the seventeenth century. While occasionally naïve in some of his understanding of the military mind, Tick nonetheless compellingly demonstrates in *War and the Soul* that all of warfare is essentially religious in nature.

Tracing the origins of war throughout time he notes that “Human history seems to demonstrate that we cannot, or will not, collectively surrender our devotion to the practice of warfare, given our inherited belief that God is as the center of it.” And while it does not seem so very commendable, Tick notes that is simply something that exists as part of the human experience - “We do not hate the altered state of war….to the contrary, we crave the state of being war offers us. We are aroused by, addicted to, and in love with the archetype of war.”34 This lends to the concept that the practice of warfare and the practice of faith are not at all inimical ideas but rather co-exist in tandem, one with the other. It is an understanding which implies that the warrior has a special understanding of faith and that faith has an inalienable connection to the world of warfare.

That the relationship between warfare and faith was a commonly accepted tenet of the Puritan mind is evident in countless references to this subject throughout their literature and messages. The spiritual forces of good were locked in a battle against the forces of darkness and the consequences of their behavior, belief and actions have eternal consequences. Indeed, all of human history is building up to a final battle and the true

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church was and always will be in a state of conflict with the “world” until that final
reckoning after which God’s people will reign triumphant. In 1646, John Geere, an
Oxford scholar and prominent Puritan minister wrote a brief but definitive treatise on the
basic nature of Puritanism entitled *The Character of an Old English Puritan, or Non-
Conformist*. He adamantly countered the misconception that Puritans were purposefully
austere, drab and lifeless. On the contrary, Puritans, because of their right relationship
with the Creator, were best positioned to enjoy the benefits of creation but always with
the mindset that matters of eternity underlay all their actions. Ultimately, a true believer
was a warrior with Christ as his commander and by steady perseverance he would
eventually be counted victorious:

He was sober in the use of things of this life, rather beating down the body, than
pampering it, yet he denied not himself the use of God’s blessing, lest he should
be unthankful, but avoid excess lest he should be forgetful of the Donor. In his
habit he avoided costliness and vanity, neither exceeding his degree in civility,
nor declining what suited with Christianity, desiring in all things to express
gravity. *His own life he accounted a warfare, wherein Christ was his captain, his
arms - prayers, and tears.* [emphasis added]. The Cross is his, and his word
perfect, Vincent *qui patitur.*

The intensity of the Puritan life was due in part to this concept that one’s actions matter;
that seemingly minor actions can have significant consequences when viewed with an
eternal perspective. The true Christian lifestyle demanded far more than a complacent
practice of high church liturgy and ceremony reserved for particular days and times. It
was to be a living, enthusiastic practice that was part and parcel of every moment and
every arena of the believer’s life.

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35 John Geere, *The Character of an Old English Puritan, or Non-Conformist*,
Another point of convergence between the military world and the Puritan faith construct is the similarity between entering military service and religious conversion. The act of taking an oath and signing the military enlistment papers is something akin to their concept of the entering the salvation covenant with God which takes place at a specific place and time. It was a definitive act with immediate results; the likes of which few people experience in their lifetimes. Once the individual had taken an oath of service and signaled their commitment, they were no longer, technically, a civilian. An irrevocable change had taken place beginning with the initiation of the contract. While they were certainly not military professionals at that point, they had taken the first steps towards a new lifestyle and some would spend a lifetime working to perfect their military skills. Likewise, in the Puritan mind, in those that God had pre-selected, he would perform an initial work of grace that was to be the beginning of a life of training, growth and development.

In the British and American military tradition, entering the service and entering the salvific state of faith were specific voluntary acts in which they committed their lives to a higher purpose. There was no “draft” in the Puritan community nor was there salvation by mere association with the church; to be a part of the army of Christ required an initial act of “enlistment” on the part of each individual. Christian faith for them was very much a lifestyle of service, first to God and then to their family and fellow believers. Enlistment was for a lifetime and it separated them, to some degree, from the rest of the world; properly lived, it changed one forever and permeated every aspect of their lives.

This is an exceptionally critical tenant that numerous students of colonial and Puritan history seem to have trouble fully grasping. In various treatises, scholars
repeatedly purport the efforts of Puritan divines to exhort the “faithful” to lives of austere devotion in the hopes that they might one day gain heaven. In actuality, the confirmed Puritan did not at all live in constant fear of torment and hell fire. The heart of the gospel was that they lived in a state of grace knowing that because of their covenant with God through the saving power of Christ, their salvation was already assured. Their manner of living was not to gain salvation but to live out the salvation they believed they had already received. For some, this much surety might be a false spirituality and thus they were cautious in proclaiming their redeemed state but affirmed that as far as could be known in this world, they were indeed members of God’s elect.

It is this profound assurance that gave them the confidence to establish far flung communities and engage the world in a pro-active and purposeful manner. It is now wonder, then, that in later years, the descendants of the Puritans would be the most energetic missionaries, bring what they believed to be a the light of life and true liberty to an oppressed world. It is important to note that as they saw the nature of their faith and its working out in the American political milieu as a life of ideal liberty, they too sought to disseminate both a message of Christian liberty and democratic liberty as well. The drive to promulgate future American civil-military missions was impelled in part by this desire to spread a life-changing “gospel of democracy”; to insure that all nations were availed of the same truths with which America had been blessed. Again, while there are certainly many other self-serving purposes at play in America’s engagement, the sincere belief in the ability of this political message to positively impact the lifeways of other nations for the good is an undeniable motivation for many Americans.
As professional soldiers engage in ceaseless training for combat, so too were believer’s to separate themselves from frivolous, meaningless lifestyles and discipline themselves for tasks with higher meaning. In this sense, they were in no wise seeking an escape from the world but rather to live aggressively in it. According to Ziff the Puritans were not at all ascetics in their careful separation from the dominance of worldly pursuits, rather “The things of this world corrupt a sinner because he pauses over them, giving them weight, making an idol of them. But the believer uses them for godly purposes; they are sanctified to him through his gracious calling.”

For the Puritan, the ultimate spiritual battle had already been won and their salvation already accomplished. What remained was a life of constancy to be lived in gratitude and in the presence of the Savior; a life time seeking to attain “the fullness of Christ” and to improve themselves just as they hoped to improve their society. But the task of disciplining oneself is a constant burden, with rewards are far greater than any earthly joy they might have foregone. The Puritan life required discipline because, although they were indeed soldiers in Christ’s army, they were constantly at war with their own earthly passions, lusts and mental and bodily weakness that threatened to disrupt their lives and their communities. George Goodwin, a Puritan minister in England, captured the essence of this conflict in his “Self Civil War”:

I sing my SELF; my Civil Wars within;  
The Victories I howrely lose and win;  
The dayly Duel, the continuall Strife,  
The Warr that ends not, till I end my life.  
And yet, not Mine alone, nor onely Mine,  
But every-Ones’ that under th’ honor’d Signe  
Of Christ his Standard, shal his Name enroule,

36 Ziff, Puritanism In America, 24.
With holy Vowes of Body and of Soule\textsuperscript{37}

Goodwin writes these lines with a reference to the recently fought English Civil War of which he had been a part. He encourages the reader by noting that daily struggle is the life of every believer; that is not a sign of faithlessness but a condition of all those who have enrolled under Christ’s banner.

“Calling” was another core concept of the Puritan life. Each individual had a meaning beyond his or her own life and immediate vocation. Ultimately, the believer’s mission was to please and serve God in whatever station he was in but it also applied to entering a vocation that would allow one to contribute to the common good. For the believer, there could be no overwhelming sense of meaningless of existence for life was meant to be lived in God’s fellowship and in that of other believers regardless of one’s circumstances. The sense of “calling” meant that each individual was special to God and had been selected to serve. New England militiamen literally took to heart the scriptural admonition that “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”\textsuperscript{38} This also required one to imbue even mundane daily tasks with the sense of a higher purpose and to prefer others before self. Constantly seeking the welfare of others first, while counter-intuitive to the modern psychology of providing for self-interests first, becomes uniquely liberating. By giving of oneself and denying over riding self-interest, the warrior and believer gains immensely. It is a concept with which modern American soldiers and Veterans are intimately familiar and hold dear.


\textsuperscript{38} The Holy Bible, King James Version (New York: American Bible Society), II Timothy 2:4.
The Puritan was to enjoy the blessings of this life that God provided (to whatever extent God chose to give them) but always in humility and without vanity. In physical warfare and spiritual warfare one’s actions take on a significant meaning and life is experienced far more intensely than the uninitiated or unbelieving will know. As Tick notes, “War is a mythic arena. In its noise and grandiosity, its manipulation of the forces of life and death, and its irrevocable shaping of history and destiny, war transforms the mundane into the epic and legendary” and “in war as in myth, every action is definitive and the stakes are absolute. Any movement could be our last. During battle, the heart beats too hard. Adrenaline pumps too fast. Muscles and minds strain to perform beyond capacity.” The comparison between spiritual struggle and that of physical combat take on special meaning. Puritans well understood the special calling of all believers to the realm of eternal combat and regularly preached messages that would complement Tick’s assertions that “In war, everything is rendered ultimate, just as it is in myth…Because the simplest matters …can be linked to such dire and unalterable consequences, they take on a transcendent quality.”39 In like manner, Puritans placed great emphasis on a biblical lifestyle that had meaning far beyond the simple activities of day to day life.

To assume the life of a true believer meant that, though although one now has gained divine peace with God, one has entered an armed camp that is at constant and relentless war with unseen forces of darkness. Followers of Christ are locked in a contest that only ends with the believer’s passage from this life to the next and which will ultimately be resolved in the final battle and Christ’s return in glory at the end of times. In the Puritan mindset, the Second Coming of Christ was likely not far off; these were dire times beset with bloody persecutions and titanic wars of religious origin on the

continent and thus true Christians were to live with an added air of expectation and preparedness. The political and military forces of false and corrupt religion (the kingdoms aligned with Rome) were a real and menacing threat to newly converted regions of Protestantism and recent reversals in fortune only increased their sense of beleaguerment.

John Calvin, the French Catholic lawyer turned Protestant minister on whose teachings much of Puritanism thrived, constantly preached from the Protestant stronghold of Geneva that believers must be ready to arm themselves both physically and spiritually in order to effectively wage a warfare that had cosmic consequences. Calvin capitalized on the several positive military references in the scriptures to urge readiness:

And Paul, after he has warned us that our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but with the princes of the air, with the powers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness (Eph. 6:12), forthwith bids us put on that armor capable of sustaining so great and dangerous a contest (Eph. 6:13). We have been forewarned that an enemy relentlessly threatens us …

This exhortations were all the more poignant due not only to the struggles on the continent but also because the increasing Catholic threat imposed by Charles I who only expanded on his father’s hated doctrine of the divine right of kings to rule arbitrarily.

The tenants for Parliament’s “New Model Army” can be found in Cromwell’s soldier’s guide, the first booklet of its kind to be issued to individual soldiers which was widely distributed throughout the Parliamentary army. Prepared by Cromwell himself, *The Soldier’s Catechism* was designed to reach the common soldier and serves as an orientation guide to the authority and purpose of the army much as some sections of the US Army’s “Soldier’s Guide” does in our era.

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The standards of service in a rightly ordained and biblically oriented civil-military force ("the principal things required in a Souldier") include the following:

1. That hee bee religious and godly.
2. That he be courageous and valiant.
3. That he be skilfull in the Militarie profession
   [And that the godly warrior is particularly effective because...]
1. Because they lie open to death. [they do not fear death]
2. They stand in continual need of Gods assistance. [they are in constant communion with God]
3. They fight for Religion and Reformation. [there is a spiritual/moral import in their warfighting]
4. God hath rais'd them up to execute justice.
5. Men may be as religious in this Profession as in any other.
7. A well ordered Camp is a Schoole of Vertue wherein is taught:

While the religious overtones are manifest (as one would expect from a training manual with "catechism" in the title) there are several principles listed here that ring true throughout the American military experience and many with which today’s American military leaders and troops would readily identify.

In these paragraphs, prepared for a military audience, as well as in the writings of Parliamentarians of the period, there is a profound sense that there were indeed creating something entirely new. Military and political leaders combined biblical tenants, English tradition and classical theories of governance, to create an English republic, which they in christened, in particularly egalitarians terms, “the Commonwealth of Great Britain”. In so doing, they proclaimed a concern for the well-being of all in the kingdom just as in the body of Christ, the church. Reformist leaders in England and Scotland looked for

41 Oliver Cromwell, *A Soldier’s Catechism: Written for the Encouragement and Instruction of All That Have Taken Up Arms, Especially the Common Soldiers*, 1644, viii. Accessed from https://archive.org/stream/soldierscatechis00cromuoft#page/n9/mode/1up.
examples and “lessons learned” from those who had been attempting to put into practice the principles of biblical governance.

While the various groups of dissenters wholly concurred that “sola scriptura” (scripture alone) was the rule in matters of faith and practice, they eventually fell into dispute and disunion when they could not resolve their varying interpretations of a number of doctrinal points. These disputes ultimately affected the entire experiment in Puritan governance and with the death of Cromwell, who had been appointed “Lord Protector”, the commonwealth/republic slumped into history and the Crown was restored in 1651. But while that foray into representative self-governance had ended, in the province of Massachusetts Bay, where Puritan beliefs regarding society and the proper exercise of power were ill disposed to the establishment of an aristocracy, the republican ideals of the Puritan parliament found new fields to grow and expand. It is no coincidence that formerly colony was formally admitted to the new United States as the “Commonwealth of Massachusetts”, the title by which it is known to this day.

Calvin’s exhortations indirectly influenced the eventual formation of Puritan militia forces by their effect on influential Puritan ministers in England such as John Downname who published *The Christian Warfare* in 1609. In this text, Downname called to fore the Old Testament example of the prophet Nehemiah who led God’s people to build up their walls and temple while being always trained and prepared to fight. Historian James Whisker says that the tract in effect:

… warned that Christians must not grow too fond of the material world for it is the arena of combat between the devil and God. He urges each man to become a soldier of Christ in both the spiritual and physical senses. Each reborn Christian will be awakened to the knowledge that he must stand firm physically and spiritually in the face of God’s enemies.  

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The Puritan colonists in the new world took these injunctions literally to heart when they founded the regiments of the Bay Colony militia. Legislative acts of the Great and General Court required, in the early years, that all men must be armed with a firelock when travelling throughout the colony except within the limits of Boston proper. This familiarity with firearms, particularly in the early years of settlement, surely lent to the efficiency of the militia overall. In later years, it would be those of the more remote regions who would be most naturally skilled at arms while the growing urban areas would be less inclined to activities such as hunting that gave those along the frontier an added advantage. Consequently, some have argued that there were rather less than more firearms in colonial households.

Early colonial leaders such as Captain Edward Johnson exemplified the quintessential early American militiaman. A founder of the town of Woburn, Massachusetts, he worked as a joiner while also serving as a minister and teacher. His influential early historical work, The Wonder Working Providence of Sion’s Savior in New England published in England in 1652 detailed the miraculous growth of the new colony and the manifest evidence of God’s blessing in the undertaking which was a model for Old England to appreciate and emulate. Much of the work takes on a distinctively militaristic oriented view as exemplified by Chapter VI of the text, entitled “How the People of Christ ought to behave themselves in War-like Discipline” in which Johnson urges all the new colonies modeled on God’s ideal plan:

You shall with all diligence provide against the Malignant adversaries of the truth, for assure yourselves the time is at hand wherein Antichrist will muster up all his Forces, and make war with the People of God: but it shall be to his utter overthrow. See then you store your selves with all sorts of weapons for war, furbish up your Swords, Rapiers, and all other piercing weapons. As for great Artillery, seeing present meanes fall short, waite on the Lord Christ, and he will stir up friends to provide for you: and in the meane time spare not to lay out your
coyne for powder, Bullets, Match, Armes of all sorts, and all kinde of Instruments for War.\textsuperscript{43}

While the Puritans had found a degree of safety in their New World solitude and freedom to govern themselves and worship as they wished, they yet faced the constant threat of warlike indigenous tribes as well as the “papist” French to the north and west. As Johnson went on to be an exceptional artillerist, apparently the Lord did respond to his supplications as the colony was well provided with the cannon they needed by friends in England.

The points of convergence in the spiritual mind-set of the Puritans and in the modern/western military (particularly that of the Anglo-American construct) are striking and numerous. A first and critical point of convergence concerns the initial act of becoming a “soldier.” As exemplified in some aboriginal cultures, entering the warrior class is a significant spiritual as well as physical act. According to Mircea Eliade, a professor religion and philosophy, “Initiation is equivalent to a basic change in the existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before initiation; he has become another” and experienced “a ritual death followed by resurrection or a new birth.” \textsuperscript{44} In like manner, the Puritans adamantly ascribed to the theme re-birth and the adoption of a new identity in several New Testament references of this sort such as that found in Paul’s epistle to the church at Colossae: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God … And


\textsuperscript{44} Edward Tick, \textit{War and the Soul}, 46.
[you] have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.45

IV

Early History of the Militia - the European Model

The Puritan “experiment” when transplanted far from the entrenched European hierarchical structures, found in the American wilderness a challenging climate, which encouraged the development of a unique civil and political construct unique in human history. While this was intended to be a new experiment in godliness, the Bay Colony leaders adamantly affirmed many core tenets of their inherited religious and political traditions. Yet, relatively free from the stifling constraints of their European homeland, the foundations of their world (church, secular government, and especially the militia), were recast and re-interpreted through new thought processes and the unique forces at work in the New World. It was a unique blend of oppositional behavior to perceived corruption coupled with an intense desire for the establishment of a society based on elements of an idealized past (the energy of the early church, the flourishing of the rights of Englishmen, etc.). Giving credence to this notion, historian John Shy notes that:

The colonial militia, in particular, represents the happy uniqueness of America, where Englishmen in the seventeenth century revived this military relic of the

middle ages just as, in Europe it was sinking beneath the superiority of the politically dangerous mercenary army on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{46}

While much attention has been given to the transformation and development of religious and civil government structures, relatively less has been paid to the impact that Puritanism had on the civil-military construct. The unique fusion of religious piety and traditional military forms produced an exceptional military force that in some shapes and forms exists to this day in the modern American military.

Traditionally, in medieval Europe, royalty maintained an armed forced of skilled soldiers which could be combined to form an army of warriors and lords and perhaps augmented by the militia which was the whole body of the male populace, traditionally between sixteen and sixty years of age. The term “militia” serves as the basis for “military” and simply means “a soldier.” Just as it serves this purpose at a foundational grammatical level, it also lends itself to the concept of serving as a basis for all military forces that might be employed in a conflict. In England, all freemen were required by law (often haphazardly enforced) to maintain some type weaponry as his own expense (eg Henry II’s \textit{Assize of Arms, 1181}). Prior to this the rulers of the various petty kingdoms might call out the \textit{fyrd}, the peasant masses with little or no skill or training. By the time Elizabeth I came to power in, units of militia had been some form of regular standardized training and were thus known simply as the “Trained Bands.” While it gradually diminished from neglect or by opposition from the Crown in England, it was this concept of the Trained Bands that became a mainstay of New England colonial life and eventually formed the companies and regiments of the Bay Colony Militia. Eventually, their

baseline concepts of service and training were modeled to a great degree on the newly created professional army created by Parliament.

The militia maintained (and continues to maintain) a distinct persona best defined in the American way of war as that of a “citizen-soldier.” While some consider the large scale forces raised for the service in the Second World War to be as citizen-soldiers, the more traditional use is for those who serve in the local forces with responsibilities to a dual chain as command embodied by the President as Commander in Chief should they be federalized for a national conflict or by the Governor as Commander in Chief for all other regular training and state emergencies. Many would say that today’s Guardsmen (and their close kin in the corresponding federal controlled Reserve forces) are in actuality “twice the citizen.” The characteristics that Whisker details for the early colonial militia remain largely unchanged to this day and more importantly, very much apply to the forces of the “regular/active duty” establishment as well.

The citizen-soldier stands in marked contrast to the professional soldier whose vocation is war. The citizen-soldier does not enter war for pay or booty. He goes to war only reluctantly, spurred on by notions of patriotism and nationalism and of duty. He deplores war. He fights only as a last recourse when his nation is threatened and not in imperialistic adventures.

Just as in 1636, today’s citizen-soldiers must be proficient in their handling of weapons and equipment and even more so thoroughly trained to exacting standards given the advent of increasingly complex and refined weapons systems. They must do all this while at the same time attending to a full time job and civilian career and meeting the needs of their families. They are truly admirable in their commitment to country, commonwealth and community. 47

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In tracing the modern US Army’s cultural DNA, it will be found that its longest strand is that which links it to the profound influence of its New England Puritan past. Founded in 1636 as the militia of the Massachusetts Bay Company, it is remarkable that its foundational units have trained without ceasing for 380 years and still function today as the Massachusetts National Guard’s 181st Infantry Regiment, 182nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Artillery Regiment and 101st Engineer Regiment. The value of these units to the Army legacy is such that it affects decisions made at the Army G-8 force structure management directorate located at the Headquarters, Department of the Army in the Pentagon. Decisions as to force re-alignment and closure or activation are made with a conscious awareness of the need to maintain a continued unit presence in certain towns in which the original units existed in 1636.

A visceral understanding of this remarkable legacy might be provided by the relation of an event this author experienced while participating in military command ceremony for the 182nd Infantry at which several hundred soldiers were present all standing in mass formation. In front of them all stood the battalion commander, his four officer staff and the Command Sergeant Major, the senior enlisted soldier of the command. They were accompanied by the bearers of the national colors and the dark blue regimental flag crowned with numerous heavy cloth streamers attached below the finial at the top of the pole and embroidered with the names of campaigns and battles in which the command had participated throughout its existence (some before the creation of the United States). As the ceremony progressed, the young soldier given the honor to carry the battalion colors exclaimed under his breath at his excessive burden in comparison to the soldier carrying the national flag. In response, the older, seasoned sergeant major said
gruffly, “Son, that’s because you are literally carrying the weight of our history in your hands.”

Old World Militia Transition to North America

When speaking of enduring influences in America’s cultural construct, it is worth noting the significantly similar experiences with those of her military parentage; particularly that experienced during the English Civil War. While significant numbers of Puritans had migrated to the Americas by the time of the war’s onset in 1638, there were still a significantly large number of them in the homeland who continued to move to exercise power and rise to increasingly more responsible positions of authority. Throughout the Puritan “experiment” in the New World, there was a constant interchange with those who stayed behind to seek reformation in Old England. The dissenters and non-conformists in church and state became increasingly influential in national life and their faith driven policies found much in common with a burgeoning democratic impulse across the kingdom. The once denigrated and at times persecuted sect of the Anglican church steadily gained ground until the country met a tipping point in which Parliament became an essentially Puritan institution and the demise of the royalist influence with the resultant dramatic trial and execution of Charles in 1649.

As the conflict commenced, the turmoil embroiled both who had aligned themselves with the English several years earlier in the “Union of the Crowns.” Those Puritans who gained power in Scotland were Calvinists in nature like their English spiritual kin but found themselves divided on the manner of how the true church should be governed (they holding to a council of presbyters thus the denomination of
“Presbyterian”), adapted a cardinal spiritual tenet of the sacred covenant concept to create a “Covenanting” government. In raising forces for the conflict to complement their English allies the employed the advantages of a few thousand of their troops who had been deployed to fight the Spanish Catholics on the continent in the Netherlands and thus served to leaven the army with trained veterans. Raising troops was a matter of recruiting volunteers or holding towns responsible for their creation – a tradition that the American forces have adopted and maintained for the vast majority of American military history. Rote conscription was largely unknown and today, voluntary service remains a hallmark of both American and Anglo forces.

For a model to develop their forces, they adopted many elements of the highly successful Swedish military system, a strongly Protestant faith based force. Significantly, the Puritan ministers played a major role in raising the required volunteers. In The Civil Wars: a Military History of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1638-1660, scholars relate that “in town and countryside alike, the clergy publicized the levies and encouraged men to join up” and enlist to fight the “papist” forces in England who ultimately sought to take the gospel from them. The practical application of the faith of the Covenanting soldiers served to empower and mark them as a highly disciplined force far better than regular troops as testified by one covenanting chaplains:

My Lord Montgomery’s regiment [was] among the strongest; both the piety and military discipline of his people were commended above all the rest; yea none did doubt but in all our camp those of the West were the most worthy. They came readily and in the greatest numbers; they made most conscience of the cause and their behavior: the fear of them made others stand in awe... 48

The Scottish reputation for elan in battle was well known and the practice of their Puritan faith served to augment it in this context.

Correspondingly, England’s “New Model Army,” the great innovation of Parliament, was forged in the fire of conflict and served as the template for the professional standing British army of the future. Numbers of New England Puritans did return to fight in these forces and participate in the new experience of a disciplined military force that was officered and led not by social aristocrats but the middling classes that made up the bulk of the population. They were far younger and came from the lower ranks of their families by design and fully 18% are known to have risen from enlisted and non-commissioned officer ranks “in clear defiance of the practice in all other British armies from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.”

The Puritan’s practice of selecting leadership based on competence and capability rather than social ranking, was fully embraced across the Atlantic by the New Englanders. It accorded well with their experiences in the New World where the generally egalitarian nature of their faith and the conditions of the rough frontier allowed for advancement based more on merit rather than on pedigree.

Only in London had there been anything like the New England militia, where, as in the wilderness, Puritan-inclined gentlemen of wealth and breeding realized that popularly supported, well-equipped, and disciplined trainbands were necessary to preserve their lives, liberties, and fortunes. On the frontier, where common men seized hold of greater shares of substance and dignity, they developed within the old traditional aristocratic leadership new traditions of majority rule, popular nomination of officers, local self-government, and almost universal manhood.

suffrage when they elected trainband officers, served in fighting companies, and maintained other branches of their system of defense.\textsuperscript{50}

In terms of military leadership, Cromwell’s guide again proves a source of several timely principles, the substance of which may be found in later English and American militia training guides (although without the pointed spiritual references). After encouraging officers and soldiers alike to read military history, he admonishes that “Every soildier should seeke to God by prayer, that he would instruct and teach them, for it is the blessing of God that makes men to profit in any profession.” In regards to troop leading, Cromwell provides guidance in response to the posed query “How ought Commanders and Officers to carry themselves towards their Souldiers?” by essentially emphasizing that which is the Army leadership tenants of this day – the “Be, Know and Do” principles (to first be an example, know your profession and then follow through accordingly). In those terms he instructs commanders that they should fulfill their leadership responsibilities towards their troops by enforcing discipline and to do so “1. Religiously, showing them no evil example, but being a pattern to them of virtue and godliness; 2. Lovingly, not in a sterne rugged manner, considering that their Command is not over Beasts, But men.”\textsuperscript{51} These practices, in turn, became a hallmark of the American way of war in which skilled commanders were to lead with compassion and dignity with a concern for the welfare of their soldiers always at the fore of their actions. This idealized concept finds expression in today’s Army via the commonly used imperative “Mission First – Soldiers Always!”


\textsuperscript{51} Cromwell, \textit{The Souldiers Catechism}, 26.
Sociologically, the profession of religious faith by the bulk of forces has at times served as a cohesive element and a motivational factor. However, it has also been seen as hindrance to the ability to readily execute the violent and at times gruesome acts that warfare requires. There are abundant examples throughout military history of dogmatic and religiously unified forces that failed miserably or worse yet, committed horrendous atrocities in the name of faith. However, the New Model Army, with rallying cries shouted from the ranks such as “No King But Jesus!” seems to have fully benefited by as genuine a practice of faith as any.

That the armies of Parliament were better disciplined than those of the king is a cliché. It is well known that under Manchester, Fairfax and Cromwell soldiers were severely punished for swearing, drunkenness, and whoring, as well as the more serious offences against military order: negligence, cowardice, plundering, mutiny, and desertion. During the two years after its founding publicists for the New Model Army did not tire of boasting that its soldiers took not so much as an egg from the countryman without paying for it, and that in preference to cards and dice they spent their leisure time in Bible study and prayer.\textsuperscript{52}

Warfare by its very nature allows for the expression of the very worst and the very best of human behavior. The positive testimony of the Puritan forces is in itself a remarkable testimony given that Europe was emerging from its not too distant medieval past in which rape, pillage and plunder were the norm rather than the exception in most conflicts on the continent. Those practices certainly did not cease with the advent of the New Model army but they were a notable stepping stone on the path to a professional military that came to shun these practices. The triumph of the average citizen and the beginnings of a truly professional force encapsulated in the stories of the English civil wars and serve as military examples for their cultural descendants and are part of the American military legacy.

\textsuperscript{52} Keyon and Ohlmeyer, \textit{The Civil Wars}, 111.
Criticality of the Militia in Puritan Life

Scholars of early American history have tended to ignore or only give short shrift to the New England militia as a unique facet of Puritan life and culture. This despite the repeated allusions John Adams makes to the exceptional role the militia held in determining America’s identity and the decidedly democratic aspect of the militia organization. According to Timothy Breen, a leading colonial scholar:

This view of the militia now requires modification, for re-examination of the Massachusetts system of defense reveals that it was as much an expression of Puritan social ideas as were the New England town meetings and the Congregational churches. Indeed, the history of the village trainbands paralleled the development of other, more obviously Puritan institutions.53

The fact that the militiamen and later, town stake holders could freely elect their company leadership was a strikingly unique innovation that contributed much to the burgeoning concept of American liberty. In another article, Breen identifies a controversy over the matter of militia self-governance as the catalyst for a pivotal debate on the sharing of power whose resolution left a marked impact on American political practice to this day. As early as 1632, the local militia companies settled on the concept of electing their own company commanders and subordinate officers. They agreed that the central government, the Great and General Court, would reserve the authority to approve the results of the local elections. And it practice, the Court almost never countered the decisions made at the local level. But when the current governor, the esteemed and

generally popular Jonathan Winthrop attempted to rule in a dispute within the Hingham militia, he nearly lost his position in the ensuing fracas.

Hingham reacted to what it perceived as a threat to its independence much as the English local communities reacted first to Charles and then to Cromwell. And like the members of Parliament, the village representatives serving in the Massachusetts legislature tried to assert their rights through impeachment. Winthrop came out of this trial with his reputation intact, but Hingham had served notice that civil power flowed up from the local communities, not down from a county elite.\(^{54}\)

The old English county system of government that was being applied as the accepted form of regional government in New England would be irrevocably altered after this point.

This development did not sit well with visiting military professionals in the king’s standing forces who expressed dismay at this “new system” as being contrary to the top-down driven practices of total control exercised by the elites. Again, misperceptions continued to abound in regards to the particular developments of the New England Way. As Breen notes, this was not at all the case:

It was the king’s appointed officers, not the elected New Englanders, who were viewed as the true innovators. The immigrants merely restored the trainbands to community control. Once the militia had been transformed into a local structure, it became highly unlikely that it could be used to oppress the settlers. And it is not surprising that a survey of Massachusetts records reveals no instance in which the colony’s rulers attempted to employ the militia as a police force, as a tax collector, or as an instrument of social control.\(^{55}\)

The crown “innovation” was not at all well received and the traditional methods maintained by the Puritan communities helped re-dress the imbalance caused by royal

\(^{54}\) Breen, “Persistent Localism,” 22.

\(^{55}\) Breen, “Persistent Localism,” 23.
grasping of power. It was not uncommon for many American militia units in later years to elect their leadership but the practice gradually faded as the country transitioned to a fully regulated force administered by the National Guard Bureau and the Department of the Army.

Contrary to some popular belief, the Puritan believers were not at all adamantly opposed to military structures as inherent threats to liberty or freedoms. Indeed, they generally approved of military service as part of the commonwealth concept essential to maintaining their freedoms. It was the crown controlled forces and appointed leaders (the “Lord Lieutenants” under Elizabeth) that concerned them. Indeed, the matter of a proper administration of the militia was one of their breaking points with the Crown among many others as noted by James Whisker in *The American Colonial Militia*:

They lacked a sufficient tax base to be able to bear the costs of a standing military. Many citizens philosophically opposed having a standing army, thinking it destructive of liberties. If the Crown provided the soldiers, it could assume a significant role in the affairs of the colonies. Most of the New England colonies harbored secrets, especially regarding the degree to which their state-established religion was in communion with the Church of England. Some also thought that citizens were free only when they shouldered the burden of their own defense…While the European militias had atrophied and could, at best, be considered a vestigial organ of the state, the American militias had become vibrant military, social, and fraternal organizations necessary to the very existence of the colonies.\(^{56}\)

Initially the Bay Colony settlers found ways to purchase or share land with the native inhabitants or ways to accommodate each other. But eventually, matters came to a head with the bloody conflict known as “King Phillip’s War” in 1675 in which the Wampanoag Indian “king” and many of his people were destroyed after launching a series of attacks on Puritan settlements. While initially seeking to co-exist and minister

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to the natives (at least in their organizing mission statements) the Puritan leaders and clergy moved to the concept of themselves as the new children of Israel and the Indians as irredeemable and dangerous antagonists who had to be driven from the land of their New Canaan that God had given them.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{quote}
Militia Training – The Training Day Muster
\end{quote}

Militia units were based in their respective established towns and together with the local congregation (the church) and the local school helped define daily life in New England much as it was in old England. Eligible militia men were called to assemble, ie “muster,” on regular occasions usually on the centrally located town common or “green” at which the town muster master would check attendance, readiness for training and equipment status. Fines were imposed on those failing to appear or inappropriately equipped. Initially, the troops would meet at least weekly (or even more, depending on the current threat) but eventually, as the Indian threat subsided and no immediate European conflict was looming, they devolved to meeting four times per year. True to their penchant for enjoying a motivational or learned discourse on some topic, the training day typically included a message/sermon provided by the local minister who habitually served as the unit chaplain at these events. According to the authors of \textit{For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607-2012}, these events helped forge a bond between the concept of military service and the approved lifestyle of the Bay Colony militiamen which:

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{57} Whisker, \textit{The American Colonial Militia Vol II}: 9.
\end{footnotes}
...fostered an aggressive militancy by emphasizing that the Bible sanctioned martial activity and that warfare was a true Christian’s sacred duty. “Hence it is no ways unbecoming a Christian to learn to be a Souldier,” Chaplain Samuel Nowell preached to Massachusetts militiamen in 1678, because being a soldier was “a Credit, a praise and a glory.”

The authors reflect an unfortunately commonly held perception that fails to include a nuanced understanding of the Puritan soldier’s mindset by insisting that these messages gave militiamen complete peace of mind that whatever violence they might inflict, it would be within God’s will and completely sanctioned with no moral qualms for the participant. A closer reading of many of these sermons clearly reveals that applying military force was a matter of much trepidation for most believers which required reassurance from the clergy that it might be applied only in the proper context.

Reconciling martial practices with the lifestyle of the follower of Christ was a complex matter in the Puritan cosmos. The practice of a true Christian faith was a fundamentally non-aggressive and non-violent exercise much in accordance with the precepts of the early Church to the point of “turning the other cheek” rather than striking back when wrongfully accosted. That said, the New Testament scriptures contain numerous allegorical references to warriors and warfare as framework in which to consider the conduct of their lives as followers of Christ. Considering the oppressive environment occasioned by the harsh presence of Roman imperial forces and their auxiliaries, it would seem that most Judeans would hold a less than positive view of military service. In age where most military activity consisted in the occasional raising and then dissipation of forces for short term campaigns, only the royalty might retain a

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number of professional soldiers or mercenaries. So, the only real frame of reference for a professional warrior remained the legions.

By and large, only the legions maintained the discipline, orderliness and efficiency that served as a model for the Christian life. As Whisker notes in *In the American Colonial Militia*, “the clergy revived the notion that had plagued St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and most of the commentators in the new field of international law, namely, what is the just war?” The Puritan leaders and clergy adamantly agreed that pacifism, ideal as it might be, was not the model that the church must follow. Indeed, life in the current age requires a practical approach of armed preparedness; of God’s people pro-actively training and perfecting the arts of war.59

Puritan ministers realistically faced the prospect that, while God was sovereign and nothing happened without His consent, this did not by any means guarantee physical protection from potential enemies even for God’s elect. Indeed, they understood from the New Testament that they were in an active state of warfare, both spiritual and potentially physically. Rev. Oliver Peabody made emphasized the need for martial preparedness as he addressed Boston’s “Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company” in 1732:

> We have seen and felt by unhappy Experience, that a People's Enjoyment of Gospel Privileges, is no effectual Security against Enemies and Wars: The Time is not (we may fear) yet come, when Men may beat their Swords into Plow shares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks; that Nation shall not lift up Sword against Nation, neither shall they learn War any more*. Nor may we expect it will, till Men will be effectually perswaded in the day of Christ's Power, to lay down the Weapons of their Rebellion against the Lord of Hosts, and list cheerfully [sic] under the Banner of Christ, the great Captain of our Salvation; and become his obedient and loyal Subjects, and good Soldiers.

The minister goes on to address the age old conflict of the very valid conundrum believers faced when sincerely considering how a true faith based on God’s encompassing love could be reconciled with a requirement to do bodily harm to those whom He came to save. Peabody reminds them of those warrior leaders in the Old Testament who held favor with God and the instructions of the New Covenant of grace that continued to shed a practical light on the value of military service:

Neither is the Profession of Religion in the least inconsistent with a Military Spirit, and the Art of War: The most holy and wise of all Men have practiced War, and have been famous for their Valour and Achievements [sic] therein, as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David and others; and this Command was given to Judah, God's own People. Further, the Life of a Christian is compared to a Warfare, and we are commanded to put on the Armour of God, and to be good Soldiers of Christ.\(^6^0\)

This message very much reflects the commonly accepted view towards war and warfare among the Puritan communities: we seek peace always, but living in an unredeemed and violent world requires that we prepare always for war. Accordingly, the Divine approval for these preparations has a very defined template in both the Old and New Testament scriptures.

Towards a Mature Militia

Cotton Mather, the esteemed minister of Boston’s North Church, was an extremely influential historian, aspiring scientist and political leader. By 1702, when he published his superb seven volume Magnalia Christi Americana (the Great Works of Christ In America), the Puritan experiment was less than one hundred years old but the demise of the old charter and the assumption of government by leadership imposed from

\(^6^0\) Rev. Oliver Peabody, *An Essay to revive and encourage Military Exercises, Skill and Valour among the Sons of God’s People in New-England.* A Sermon Preached before the Honourable Artillery-Company In Boston, June 5th. 1732; Accessed from https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ evans/n02994.0001.001?rgn=main; view=fulltext
without the colony had markedly changed the outward form of the movement although
the inner core of the belief system remained vibrant. Mather represented the best of the
founding fathers in that he was the grandson of Rev. Richard Mather, another critically
engaging figure in the mid-years of the pure Congregationalist experiment and the
preeminent minister to Boston, John Cotton. In the midst of social change and the
relaxing or disappearance of previously vibrant community faith practices, he reaffirmed
the basic foundations of the “city on a hill” for the believers. He confirms, as previous
ministers had. Professor John Ferling notes the motivations and justifications inherent to
Puritan war-making in *A Wilderness of Miseries: War and Warriors in Early America*:

> When God told each disciple to be a “souldier of Jesus Christ,” it was said, He
> meant they were to be warriors in the fullest sense of the term. Lawful soldiering,
> therefore, not only was not immoral, according to Cotton Mather, it was “a
> Needful, yea, and a very Noble Thing.”... [However] some were anxious that
> witnesses to the horror of war might grow less resolute in their Christian faith.
> On the other hand, the dangers implicit in soldiering tended to “rectifieth his
> Arms” by enlarging “his Views beyond the Limits of this short Life.” And as the
> soldier thought more of the next world and less of the pleasure on this earth, his
> virtue as a warrior increased...The Christian warrior would be characterized by
> firmness and an intrepid spirit... some writers deprecated the maxim of
> Machiavelli that religion mad men cowardly; they argued that the most valiant
> soldiers had always been “the most eminent for the Religion.” Christianity, they
> stressed, transformed “effeminate Cowards” into “valiant Heroes.”

By virtue of this logic, the American populace recognized a sense of nobility and
preferential treatment to be accorded to those who took up arms for the good of the
commonwealth (a common sentiment among many cultures where veterans are revered
for their service). As Ferling relates, the Puritans felt that experience of a believer in a
right relationship with God gave them an extra dimension and strength when performing
military duties.⁶¹

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⁶¹ John E. Ferling, *A Wilderness of Miseries: War and Warriors in Early America*,
(Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 83-84.
In a sense the Puritan leaders are alluding to the intensity of the authentic experience of life felt by one who has come to grips with the matter of life and death itself. It is true that soldiering can be a uniquely powerful experience, particularly for those who have experienced combat first hand. The execution of trivial actions and menial tasks can take on a life or death magnitude which gives the warrior a sense of authenticity that few others have. In much the same way, Puritans believed that one’s conversion experience and subsequent “new life” was on an extreme level of genuiness. Unlike those “Machiavellian” secularists who believed that Christians were living an escapist existence in constant fear of their souls, they believed that only the Christian is able to truly experience life to the fullest and be a recipient of the empowerment that comes from having a direct relationship with God. It lent an air of authenticity, at least among the earliest settlers, to the communities as a whole, that were bounded by laws and practices that were ultimately meant to allow for an ideal experience of liberty.

A unique and more recently celebrated contributor to national identity and what has come to be known as the American way is the Puritan cum Baptist cum non-dogmatist intellectual Roger Williams. Building on the legal tenants developed by his mentor, the great British jurist Sir Edward Coke, Williams generated and practiced an early form of what has come to be common place Americanism in the dissident catch all of the Rhode Island colonies. His faith practices have been described as a joyous love of God and were applied in a practical matter in terms of governance, relations with the Indians and toleration of other faith groups. At first feted and celebrated on his arrival in Boston in 1634, his intensity and desire for purity in doctrine and practice soon put him at odds with the colonies leadership resulting in his eventual banishment to Rhode Island where he founded the plantation of Providence. His contributions to American national
identity are many and are unfortunately little recognized today. This was particularly so in regards to his insistence on the matters of, if not actual separation, at least a practical definition of the proper roles of church and state. He believed the church should be a pure environment akin to the Garden of Eden and demarcated from the realm of the civil exercise of power. It was an exceptional formulation of accommodation in what is still an on-going discussion about the role of religion and morality in the American state. In his insightful study *Rodger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul*, John Barry explicated the Williams point of divergence from the mother colony:

His view of the “city,” the civil state, and of the church could hardly have differed more from Winthrop’s “city upon a hill.” Yes Williams and Winthrop shared the identical theology, the identical belief that the Bible was the Word of God, the identical religiosity, the identical devotion to Christ, the identical conviction that Christ could be returning soon. In short, his belief both the purity of the church and the sinfulness of man compelled him to demand absolute separation, “a wall of separation” as he had written earlier, between the Edenic garden of the church and the corrupt world of the state.62

The history of the early Puritan martial experience in the New World is relatively limited in terms of major campaigns and large battles. The set-piece warfare of the European battlefield rarely applied to this world in which conflicts were more apt to reflect guerilla actions and counter-insurgency warfare of another era. To their credit, the first 50 years of the Bay Colony and Plymouth Colony was one of relative peace with the exception of the 1636 war with the Peqout tribe of Connecticut, an affair which ended with their virtual annihilation. The cataclysmic contest known as “King Phillips War” (the name taken by Chief Metacomet of the Wampanoag tribe) in 1675 served to unify the colonists and build their confidence, after suffering significant loss, with the final success of the militia troops in 1678. Throughout, these events proved a unique setting

for the testing and development of the Puritan belief system particularly as they engaged the local Indian tribes and later, their French allies. Morals, vaunted beliefs and purported values closely held a high and lofty place in the rhetoric of those in control of an idealist society but it is in the trials of daily living and, in this case, the cauldron of physical combat, that their validity and worth are proved or shamed and sometimes abandoned. At one time, modern historians tended to decry the horrific actions of the Europeans (500 Peqout burned alive at their palisaded settlement in Mystic, CT) and statements by some military leaders harken to the barbaric.

While these events may bring into question the validity of Puritans values, it should be taken into consideration that what we account as atrocities were perpetrated by both Puritans and Indians and that this was essentially a clash of cultures in which neither side fully understood the war fighting mores of the other. Added to this is the Puritans’ not illogical reasoning based on their only real frame of logic that they had learned from the Old Testament stories of God’s people entering the “Promised Land”. In those narratives, the Puritans saw themselves as very much akin to the “children of Israel” who had come to a safe-haven, a land that God had prepared for them. The conflicts with Native Americans, the Dutch and Spanish to the south and the French to the north contributed to their sense of a siege mentality. And just as Judea of old had been inhabited by hostile non-believers with whom the Israelites had to engage and destroy in combat, so to the aboriginal inhabitants of the New World appeared to be godless, perhaps Satan worshipping adversaries whose destruction God had pre-ordained.63 Regardless, with the exception of Roger Williams’ paradigm breaking relationships in Rhode Island and the establishment of a few small reservations, the history of

native/English relations (and later conflicts with the Plains tribes) was not a model for later generations of more capable American soldier-statesman.

Throughout these conflicts, the local township became the central feature of the New England polity. The various militias met on the town common or on the nearby the training grounds or “muster fields” (many of which are still identified in local designations to this day eg. Concord’s “Muster Field Road”; Chatham and Wayland’s “Training Field Road), to perfect the close order drill that was essential to executing effective firepower in that day. Again, Whisker emphasizes the criticality of local involvement in military preparedness:

   Towns were the basic units of military organization wherein men armed and trained themselves for war…. [they] served as vehicles for many forms of social welfare and engaged in various forms of social action. The principal function the town undertook was defense of home, citizen and community through the organization and maintenance of a militia. The militia also served a social function of social integration.64

Interestingly, we see here the early democratic feature which is prominent in today’s armed forces in which Americans of all social, economic, racial and gendered backgrounds come together in a common experience. It is this experience which serves a socially unifying factor for those who would otherwise never venture out from or chance to encounter the broader world outside their own insular communities. Then as now, the military experience serves to bond communities together through the interactions of their service members. Additionally, the ability to bear arms and serve in the militia was reserved only for those who held a certain standing in the community. While some were exempt from serving (physicians, ministers, magistrates and (in 1632) … “students and officers of Harvard College”), others were denied the right to serve due to various

64 Whisker, The American Colonial Militia Vol II: 31-32.
heinous crimes or religious offenses; these were to be disarmed immediately “because these [arms] were the symbol of freemen.”65

As the colonies approached the looming conflict of the Revolution (or “The War for America” as the British termed it) provincial forces were continuing their function as a mainstay of local power in certain areas and less so in others. Militia troops had been seasoned in numerous campaigns alongside regular Crown forces, particularly during the Seven Years War. While the resulting reputation they gained was well regarded by some, many British “professionals” continued to hold a pejorative view of their capabilities and willingness to serve. In some colonies, militia training was characterized by its haphazard nature if they trained at all. However, Massachusetts and New England in general continued a tradition of regularly assembling for training, with more or less enthusiasm, that was unbroken since the founding of the colony. The New England way thus came to influence all of the colonies and continued that influence into the early republic. Boorstin alludes to this critical influence noting that “…as the settlements pushed back from the coast and dispersed, as the Indian menace became only intermittent, a more formal organization became necessary. New England developed a military system which became the common pattern of colonial defense.”66

By the mid-eighteenth century, a number of military drill manuals existed for the basic exercise of firearms and pike to the formation and movements of large bodies of troops. Colonial leaders could choose from a variety of manuals and the Bay Colony leaders chose the template of their formerly Puritan associates in Norfolk, England. Colonel William Windham, an experienced senior officer and veteran of many battles on

65 Whisker, The American Colonial Militia Vol II: 30-3.

the continent approved of the militia concept so thoroughly practiced by the Americans and developed a manual for his home town militia based on their unique strengths and needs. It was his text that was officially adopted and mandated for use by all Bay Colony commands in 1774.

The text is rather striking in that it contains certain elements of Anglo-American standard practices and decorum that remain in effect to this day. Among other similarities, American Soldiers are trained to immediately present arms in garrison with a hand salute or presentation of their rifle (if armed with such) and initiate the greeting of the day upon coming within six paces of a commissioned officer – exactly as the Bay Colony manual directs in the 1770s. They are directed to teach the evolution of arms – handling movements to employ a halberd, pike or fire arm – by performing the movements according to the verbal calling out sequence of numbers prescribed for each movement; the method of weapons drill currently conducted to this day. But of far greater significance is the underlying atmosphere directed for an effective militia command to best operate. Unit discipline and training is to be provided by competent officers who lead not by hubris nor brow beating but humble, calm assertiveness, is the ideal; all very much in accord with the Puritan ideal.

“… The officers [must set] the example in their own persons. Mankind in general, and the vulgar especially, are greatly captivated and taken with show and parade; and when the common men see that their officers treat the affair of exercising [drilling], and the rest of their duty, with a certain ceremony and decorum, they will do the same, and be attentive and diligent; but if they find that their officers are careless and indolent, and do their duty in a negligent slovenly manner, they will infallibly imitate them.”

The ideal for American leadership is to approach the task with the seriousness required by the deadly business of armed combat yet with a sense of elan that is the hallmark of all effective military commands.
In the 1774 Massachusetts Bay Militia Manual, a great deal of attention is directed towards instructing officers on their proper deportment and responsibilities to their troops. The militia commanders knew that “discipline” in the “regulars” – their reference for the Crown troops – was generally a matter of harsh, sometimes brutal punishment meted out often for the most minor of infractions. Along with this accepted practice, there existed a sharp and unapproachable hierarchical divide between officers and the enlisted. The militia leaders, among those who had some degree of training and were well familiar with the art of war, readily concurred in need for discipline, even in the most minute details, and a clear separation of the officer and enlisted ranks as critical to the development of an effective force.

But the explicit instructions found in the text of the 1774 Bay Colony Militia manual indicates a markedly different and uniquely American approach to military professionalism. Informed by their Puritan/biblical communities and with a pragmatic understanding of the mindset of the troops with whom they had to work, they directed commanders and leaders to rigorously enforce discipline and inculcate diligence by inspiring their troops through a sedate but firm demeanor with a leader/led approach that eschewed any sense of arrogance and demanded that officers lead by example. In dealing with slow, indolent, rough-hewn awkward men, officers were instructed to “….be cool and sedate, and to teach the men with great good-nature and gentleness; at the same time, however, keeping up such a kind of deportment and behavior, as will shew them that they are under the command of a superior and inspire them with respect.”

At the same time officers were directed to actively punish those who were “willfully careless, negligent, or insolent” in accordance with military law. How to “punish” and to what extent was as much a dilemma then as it is now for any competent,
caring military leader who wishes to build a cohesive and positively motivated force. However, Bay Colony leaders were instructed that failure to punish would only invite ultimate failure and that enforcing discipline, even if it caused “a little present trouble,” would eventually serve to inspire solidarity among officers and men.

. . . nor ought they to imagine, that supporting their authority in a proper manner, by sometimes making an example of such as really deserve it, will at all lessen the esteem and attachment of the men for them; but rather the contrary; as they will then see that when they are treated with mildness and good-nature, it does not proceed from weakness, or want of spirit in their officers, but from generosity and humanity. But then all this is to be done, without screeing [sic] any passion, or using any harsh language to the men, much less striking them, which will not only inspire them with a dislike and an aversion to the service; . . . whereas by a calm quiet way of proceeding, and by showing the, separately and distinctly, what is expected from them, and what they are to do, never leaving them till they have got a clear idea of it; by degrees the awkward [sic] will improve, the dull comprehend, and the inattentive be taught to observe, and mind their business.\(^67\)

The language of New England military training somewhat reflects the scriptural imperative in II Timothy 4:2 that church leaders were to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering [great patience] and doctrine,” teaching about desirable personal traits of deportment that are powerful leadership tools to develop proper behavior and instill discipline.\(^68\)

The same qualities that made the Covenanting and New Model armies so efficient in the English Civil War were replicated almost over one hundred years later in the New World. To wage the imperial conflict against France and its Indian allies for control of critical lands along the colonial borders, the English deployed thousands of regular troops at great expense. Augmenting the regulars were the various American

\(^67\) *A Plan of Exercise for the Militia of the Colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, (Boston: John Draper, Printer, 1774)*, 34-35.

\(^68\) *The Holy Bible, King James Version (New York: American Bible Society), II Timothy 4:2.*
militia commands from New Jersey, New York and all of New England. The strength of
the Puritan way of war, still markedly evident, is reflected in a newspaper dispatch for a
London paper prepared by a New York correspondent in October, 1755 reflecting his
evaluation of the New England troops:

We put no Confidence in any other Troops than theirs; and it is generally
lamented that the British veterans were not put into Garrison and New England
Irregulars sent to the Ohio. Their men fight from Principle and always succeed.
The Behaviours of the New England Provincials at Albany is equally admirable
and satisfactory. Instead of the Devastations committed by the [British regular]
Troops in 1746, not a single Farmer has lost a Chicken or even a Mess of Herbs.
They have five Chaplains and maintain the best Order in Camp. Public Prayers,
Psalm-singing and Martial Exercises engrossed their whole Time at Albany.
Twice a week they have Sermons and are in the very best frame of Mind for an
Army, looking for success in a Dependence upon Almighty God . . . Would to
God the New England Disposition in this Respect were catching.69

Even prior to the advent of the United States, the best of American fighting men were
known for a quality of service characterized by a sense of service in light of a higher
calling. The operated in a framework that included a very real sense of self-less service
occasioned by the belief that they had submitted themselves first to God, therefore,
whatever happened would be properly in accordance with whatever He chose to do.

V

The Militia and New England in Transition – Revolution to Early Republic

As previously noted, the bulk of residents in the American colonies had always
seen themselves as profoundly British. But by the last quarter of the eighteenth century,

due to a variety of factors, they began to see themselves as increasingly divergent from their Anglo parent and increasingly resentful of what they felt were un-English and unconstitutional measures levied against them beginning with the Sugar Act of 1764 and culminating ten years later with the punitive "Intolerable Acts" of 1774. Throughout the developing conflict, Americans repeatedly expressed the sentiment that they were simply maintaining the traditional rights of Englishmen that were being violated by an over-reaching parliament.

This shared foundational experience that now appeared to be egregiously violated became a unifying theme throughout the colonies, finding voice in such popular phrases as "no taxation without representation." This universally pronounced sentiment bears a remarkably similar to the Puritans' dogged assertions that their practice of faith was nothing more than a return to true New Testament practices as well as the maintenance of traditional English values. As Breen notes in his *William and Mary Quarterly* article "Persistent Localism: English Social Change and the Shaping of New England Institutions":

But what the people back in England failed to understand was that the colonists regarded Congregationalism as a means to restore the Protestant faith and preserve true religion from outside interference. Because they were safely beyond Laud's reach, they enjoyed an opportunity to do in the 1630s what was denied Englishmen until the 1640s. The New Englanders gave the church back to the local communities. And in so doing they were responding not only to the freedom of their new environment but also to specific conditions that they had experienced in England. New England's Congregational churches, like its towns, were the result of the general antipathy that the colonists felt toward Stuart centralism.  

The New England way with its aversion to the centralization of arbitrary power contributed much to the developing regional identity that was fast becoming the

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70 Breen, "Persistent Localism," 22.
American way. This matter of local-control and dissemination of power was evident in the evolution of the militia as well.

Existing militia commands were bolstered and new companies raised as Americans were determined so show the home nation - not a radical desire for separation - but a show of force that would maintain traditional liberties and avoid a physical conflict. In his powerfully insightful work, *Paul Revere’s Ride*, award winning historian David Hackett Fischer writes that New England’s leaders were at the fore-front of this pre-emptive fight, calling on old themes and traditional imagery to inspire citizens and militia alike such as Samuel Adams use of the pen name “Puritan” when issuing his confrontational missives. He notes that:

For these men, the revolutionary movement was itself a new Puritanism – not precisely the same as the old, but similar in its long memories and large purposes. Like the old Puritans who had preceded them, the new Puritans were driven by an exalted sense of mission and high moral purpose in the world. They also believed that they were doing God’s work in the world, and no earthly force could overcome them. In the language of the first Puritans, they were both believers and seekers – absolutely certain of the rightness of their cause, and always searching restlessly for ways to serve it better.71

In testament to this sense of growing purpose was the dramatic development in the establishment of a unique American identity which began to occur with the increasing confluence of Puritan ideals and classical republican ideals.

As Kidd notes, Puritans and evangelicals held a dim view of the innate goodness of human nature (apart from the redemptive power of Christ) that did not fully accord with the ideals of some of the founding fathers. But gradually, most came to believe that American spirituality and virtuous conduct could indeed be genesis for what the firebrand patriot Samuel Adams proclaimed would be a “Christian Sparta.” Because of Great

Britain’s failure to sustain its brief but spiritually enlightened commonwealth and ensuing corruption, it remained for their progeny in America to perpetuate the ideal of a godly democracy. The notion took hold across the colonies and “With the onset of the revolutionary crisis, a major conceptual shift convinced Americans across the theological spectrum that God was raising up America for some special purpose.”  

Given the relatively insignificant economic and military power that America represented at that time, it was exceptionally audacious that this newly formed group of loosely affiliated former colonies would presume to one day develop a body politic that would dramatically influence the beliefs and destinies of a good many nations across the globe.

During and after the Revolution, many people conflated America’s political affairs with divine purposes, which lent an aura of redemptiveness to the war and to the agenda of a fledgling nation. This civil spirituality served as a transcendent framework in which to define, justify, and fight a war and establish a new American nation. It united the continuum of American believers around the proposition that “the cause of America” had become “the cause of Christ” — or at least of Providence.

Thus the American Revolution would serve not only the immediate ends for the political liberation of a segment of humanity on the Atlantic seaboard of North America but as the fulfillment of God’s plan as detailed in the scriptures. America would stand as a spiritual warfighting nation in the service of God’s purposes.

Tensions rose with an increasing regular troop presence and the imposition of Parliamentary constraints. Recently arrived professional officers deployed to the colony tended to regard the New England militia with a general contempt while more so by those that did not understand them or did not empathize with their egalitarian principles born of their faith practices and experiences on the frontier. While there was some degree of

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validity in their assessment in earlier years, the increasing tensions drove a reformation of the militia forces as local leaders discerned the possibility of an unavoidable armed conflict looming on the horizon. Historian Gary Wills notes that political considerations of Tory loyalties resulted in the re-structuring and re-vitalization of militia units:

The units were formed on ideological lines. Whig officers would now be elected by the troops themselves, and Whig loyalties would be demanded of the troops. In New England, the new bands were formed by covenant (a powerful concept the Puritans had borrowed from the biblical covenant God made with his people).⁷⁴

One after another, individual towns and districts made their decisions to affirm and support the resolutions of the new Continental Congress. While the form that their new association would take was yet to be devised, the strength of their commonly shared faith and resolute trust in each other resulted in the large scale corporate action that would re-define the British Empire in North America. Again, the role of the militia was a pivotal point in these considerations.

Astute leaders and sympathetic populations in the home country, particularly those still holding strong Puritan convictions in their various dissenting faith groups, clearly grasped what was at the heart of the American mindset. In his classic address to Parliament in March, 1775, known simply as his “address on moving his resolutions for conciliation with the colonies”, the renowned British statesman, Edmund Burke astutely captured the nature of the American spirit which found so much of its identity in the New England way:

The temper and character which prevail in our Colonies, are, I am afraid, unalterable by any human art. We cannot, I fear, falsify the pedigree of this fierce people, and persuade them that they are not sprung from a nation, in whose veins the blood of freedom circulates… I think it is nearly as little in

our power to change their republican Religion, as their free descent; or to substitute the Roman Catholic, as a penalty; or the Church of England, as an improvement.75

In this he emphasizes the filial relationship with the Americans and asserts that their passion for liberty under law is expressly derived, not from heretofore unknown political radicalism, but is the natural working out of the American experiment. Strikingly, in Burke’s mind, the Puritan faith construct aligns quite readily with republican political concepts that, ideally, give all an equal voice in the exercise of power (no church hierarchy, no hereditary aristocracy).

While the on-going “American experiment” later included large numbers of new citizens from other parts of Europe, many of Roman Catholic or other affiliations, America in the late eighteenth century was dominated by Anglican and Puritan/Puritan off-shoot faith groups. And while Anglicism more readily acted to dissuade a political separation, it is readily evident that those colonial leaders who were driven by their Puritan experience of dissent were the primary agitators for an independent state. Even at the time, political theorists such as Burke grasped the unique sway that New England mind-set held over all the colonies noting that the threatening separation was only possible due to the unique and intense Puritan experience that provided a backdrop for their reasoning and actions:

……the dissenting interests have sprung up in direct opposition to all the ordinary powers of the world; and could justify that opposition only on a strong claim to natural liberty. Their very existence depended on the powerful and unremitted assertion of that claim. All protestantism, even the most cold and passive, is a sort of dissent. But the religion most prevalent in our Northern Colonies is a refinement on the principle of resistance; it is the dissidence of dissent; and the protestantism of the protestant religion. This religion, under a variety of denominations, agreeing in nothing but in the communion of the spirit of liberty,

is predominant in most of the Northern provinces; where the Church of England, notwithstanding its legal rights, is in reality no more than a sort of private sect, not composing most probably the tenth of the people. The Colonists left England when this spirit was high; and in the emigrants was the highest of all: and even that stream of foreigners, which has been constantly flowing into these Colonies, has, for the greatest part, been composed of dissenters from the establishments of their several countries, and have brought with them a temper and character far from alien to that of the people with whom they mixed. [emphasis added] Burke clearly notes that the American drive for independence would likely not have happened if her colonies were predominantly Roman Catholic. This is in no way pejorative of the Catholics for he concurs that the Church of England yet finds much close association with Rome, only that it was the dissenting mind of the Puritan Protestants that inspired such decisive actions. Indeed, it was not till three decades later, after the Americans had set the example of the viability of an independent democratically based republic, that the Roman Catholics of the various Latin American states began to assert their independence from Spain and Portugal.

On the eve of war in colonies, a nascent separatist national identity had begun to take hold and its features were particularly evident in the interior community of Concord. Unknowingly, these devout, prosperous community would become the center stage for the opening of the great conflict that was about to engulf the eastern seaboard. In the months prior to the fateful battle, the town had reorganized its several militia companies, created “minute companies” (known today as a “rapid response force”) and had begun to gather military materials and ordnance for the colonies' forces. On March 13, 1775, the town held a grand muster and parade of the troops of the Third Middlesex Regiment (perpetuated by today’s 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard). The scene that Robert Gross so aptly relates in his exceptional work *The Minutemen and Their World* was particularly representative of the American military

76 Burke in *The Spirit of Man*, 409.
and the Puritan militia in particular; Concord being quintessential setting in that “They were performing a familiar pageant in New England life. War had engaged nearly every generation of Yankees since the founding of Massachusetts in the 1630s.” To some degree, a formation of currently serving American troops would correspond to this same formation in 1775 of whom Gross relates:

As the troops filed by under the cloudy March sky, they presented a revealing portrait of the community. This was a citizen army of rural neighbors, in sharp contrast to the British Regulars, whose aristocratic officers commanded “the dregs of society,” desperate men plucked from gaols and gin mills and other grim haunts of the English poor. The Concord militia included nearly everyone between the ages of sixteen and sixty: gentlemen, yeomen, shopkeepers, artisans, laborers, and teen-age apprentices.77

Gross notes their traits that remain characteristic of today’s Guard formations in which multiple family members may serve in the same command or who have descendants which served in the same commands in generations past. This lends a spirit of continuity and societal responsibility not found to a large degree in the active duty components. True to practice and custom, the troops were addressed by the town’s minister who also served as their regimental chaplain, Reverend William Emmerson; the same minister whose home, the Old Manse, stood on the high ground above North Bridge, who would die serving his country on the march from Ticonderoga and whose grandson would one day be president of Harvard College.

Much can and has been said about the initial pivotal role that the militia played in the early years of the Revolution, Washington’s less than glowing approbation of their abilities to combat a professional European army and finally, their eventual transition to local response, constabulary, and manpower pool roles that they gradually adopted.

However, a note should be made about the essential role that the Bay Colony Militia played in fomenting the rebellion and the critical place it held in igniting the conflagration and rupture with the parent country. Historian Ray Raphael, currently an associate editor for Journal of the American Revolution, admirably addresses the pivotal but little-known events that incited the British military command to action and the corresponding response that eventually swept all the colonies into an open rupture and warfare. In his revelatory book, *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord*, he convincingly argues that the ultimate conflict was not brought on by the actions of Boston agitators, who were but a small part of the colonies overall population, but that of the large towns and villages in the countryside whose mobilized militia companies marched into county seats, shut down the court systems (in response to the Intolerable Acts) and forced the abdication of the Crown leaders in front of masses of orderly troops standing in formation in a show of force. Thus, it was the American people, acting physically through their militia forces that eventually brought about the march of the Regulars into the Massachusetts countryside and on to long road eventually ending in their defeat at Yorktown and American independence some eight years later. 

Declension, Transformation and Continuity of the Puritan Ideal

The militia, along with all significant elements of Puritan New England, was markedly affected by the fall of the Commonwealth, the renewal of crown authority in the Restoration Period. Designs on power and an inability to come to a practical implementation of Puritan governance had ended the Commonwealth experience. Many

welcomed the return of the crown as a matter of familiarity after the rather radical departure into republican government (although it is important to note that the stated intent of the Parliamentary forces was to preserve the right of the king to rule but only as the king was rightly ruled himself by correct biblical and political principles!). The home islands soon found themselves at odds, however, with royal personages who seemed determined to accommodate Catholicism and the threats it posed towards English liberties. Determined to maintain a royal household and appalled at James II’s unabashed Catholicism, Parliament broke with tradition, disregarded James’ direct descendants and appealed to his Dutch Protestant son-in-law, William of Orange to accept the throne of England in what came to be known as the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

For the British citizenry, the decades of turmoil produced a profound sense of disillusionment with the previous practices of both the biblically focused Puritans and the tradition bound claims of the Anglicans on governance. They also rejected the rationalist fever that later swept the continent and came to an accommodation with religion and governance that resonated in America as well. International affairs analyst Walter Russel Meade, who has produced a number of works in the last two decades seeking to define the rise of American power, its application in the world and the threats resulting from American global engagement provides particular insight in this regard. His studies of the unique relationship between the United States and Great Britain include a detailed analysis of the lasting influence of the Puritans stemming from the times of the short-lived British Commonwealth. Meade notes that the move from the Puritan commonwealth was not really a matter of an insidious secularization and that:

Despite the exhaustion that followed the battles of the British Reformation, the new society that emerged had changed its relationship to religion without severing it connections with Christianity. A deep religious faith would continue to shape popular and elite attitudes in Britain for almost two centuries …The persistence of
religion in so much of the Anglo-Saxon world seems related to its ability to coexist with and even thrive on a kind of skepticism that is fatal to what Bergson would call static religion but which is characteristic of the increasingly dynamic religious orientation of the English-speaking world.  

Meade contends that this “accommodation,” while appearing to be counter to traditional Christianity which finds its legitimacy in proclaiming that is the revelation of God to mankind, actually encompasses the valuing of absolute faith with a willingness to admit that all is not yet perfectly known of God and that governments and kingdoms should consider this and act accordingly. It is a perspective that aligns rather well with Puritan off shoots who described, including the “General Baptists,” who defined themselves as “believers and seekers.” He later alludes to the concepts developed by the famous Scottish economist and philosopher, Adam Smith, who was influenced by his contemporary, Benjamin Franklin, to appreciate the positive role that fervent religion might play in a liberal society. Meade concludes that “Despite the deep tensions inherent in the coexistence of closed religious systems in a dynamic society, the two realities could exist side by side and even strengthen each other.”

The change of governance in the home islands resulted in more stringent control and a final revocation of the Bay Colony’s charter which Winthrop and the founders of the company had spirited with them to the New World in an attempt to preserve their proposed form of government from crown meddling (an arrangement that had survived relatively intact until this time). Influential representatives of the colony including Reverend Increase Mather, pastor of the meeting house in Boston’s North End, traveled and lobbied extensively for the maintenance of the old charter but achieved only limited success. Ultimately, the Puritan commonwealth of Massachusetts was forced to adjust to

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80 Meade, God and Gold, 229-230.
major alterations in their manner of living including the imposition of a royal governor and the accommodation for the establishment of Anglican places of worship within their borders. This by no means signaled the end of the Puritan experiment although if effectively ended the overwhelmingly dominant role it played in affairs of governance. The struggle to maintain a sense of a Puritan polity continued throughout the ensuing decades and in America today, the activities of the Puritans ideological ancestors give testimony to the on-going nature of this struggle for the soul of America.

Part of the difficulty that Puritans encountered was in regards to the manner in which biblical law should be applied. While biblical principles seemed relatively clear when expounded in reading and preaching, their application in the courts proved exceptionally complex. Ziff notes that the Puritans were particularly leery of the oppressive power of the Holy Roman Empire with its “satanic mixture of civil and ecclesiastical authority.” They were determined that in church and state in American governance “while they supported one another, the church certifying fit citizens and the state enforcing the procedures of the true church and prohibiting others, would not overlap.”81 The Puritans disapproved of Christian ministers serving as magistrates and barred them from holding political office (a practice that continues in many evangelical groups to this day) but the courts found an accord by referring legal questions without an immediately evident answer to boards of clerics. Erikson notes that this practice however was severely flawed in that it was counter to the practice of English common law and was another factor that contributed to the eventual demise of the Puritan state.

The decline in the predominantly Puritan ordered community was due to a number of other factors as well to include the adoption of more tolerant theological

perspectives, the rise of Unitarianism, increasing trade and global engagement, the establishment of secure borders and a corresponding decreased military threat. Likewise, the negative repercussions of the horrific events at Salem in 1692 cannot be underestimated. Generations of scholars have sought to understand how the trial and execution of seventeen community members for practicing witchcraft could have taken place and have come to various conclusions to include unrestrained authoritarianism, rampant hypocrisy and radical religious zealotry. But the later sorrow and recanting by Puritan leaders of generally sound and reasonable mind (Samuel Sewall for one) indicates that numerous factors played a role in the debacle. Ultimately, after 60 years of settlement and growth, purists were experiencing significant environmental changes (the loss of the charter, lack of fervency, challenges to cherished values etc.) that threatened the very core identity of the colony. When the appearance of the worst kind of evil arose (the betrayal and complete defection to the spiritual ‘enemy’), it may have seemed to be finally more than they could bear and the resulting forceful wave of response to the threat carried them far beyond what they ever intended.

As the Puritan communities matured in the New World, they found themselves with an altered regard for the circumstances that seemed so threatening in the Old. It was difficult to convey the sense of urgency and the elation that came with the ability to freely worship and practice as they believed God intended to the new generations of American Puritans. Erikson capably sums up the matter noting that:

...generations grew up in the new world which had lost all contact with the old, and before long the hopeful utopia had been transformed into a confident nation which no longer measured it accomplishments on an English yardstick. The later sons of Massachusetts knew far more about the forests and the seas than they did about old Archbishop Laud [their Anglican persecutor], and in their hands the
Puritan sense of grace lost its mistier qualities and became the determined realism of the Yankee.  

Puritan Vestiges in the Early Republic

With the advent of the new nation began querulous debates about the requirement and composition of a standing military force or if one would be required at all. One concern that was not in doubt was the high standard of behavior to which American soldiers would be held. Based on the precedent of a well-regulated militia and the quality of conduct of the Continental Army, American warriors would always be compelled to act in a superior moral manner. John Adams himself unabashedly declared that religion would continue to be a powerful motivational force in attaining this national standard as it had been for the Puritan militia. It was a critical matter that included the civilian population as well, again speaking to the uniqueness of the new republic and it is new form of governance that was only as powerful as the character of the citizens who pledged allegiance to it. In his post-Revolutionary War address to the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division of the Massachusetts Militia, Adams spoke of the proper way in which American military men must comport themselves:

….we have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

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82 Erkison, Wayward Puritans, 43, 57-58.
83 John Adams to the Officers of the Massachusetts Militia 1st Brigade; Accessed from http://www.beliefnet.com/resourcelib/docs/115/Message_from_John_Adams_to_the_Officers_of_the_First_Brigade_1.html
As much as military members appreciate discipline and order provided in part by “the laws” that gave structure to their existence, the laws are only as powerful as the behavior of population they are intended to govern. Again, the concept of an insistence on personal responsibility in conjunction with a moral obligation to corporate welfare was to be an essential facet of the American/New England way of war.

In his examination of the enduring influence of Puritanism in the early republic, Brown University professor Philip Gould conducted an extensive review of American literature in the pre-Hawthorne 1820s. In *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism*, he traces the evolution of Puritanism in the traumatic years of the establishment of an American identity. While the national consensus still did not embrace a professional army of any substantial size, it did approve of the merits and values that the local militia and national military could contribute to the developing American nation and citizenry. Counter to the notions of most European nations, American military service, particularly in the examples and influence of its leaders, could be a positive educational experience. Gould relates a particularly telling address that reveals this mindset by John Davis, a US attorney in Boston on the occasion of the ceremonies attendant to the death of the revered George Washington:

> Modelled by [Washington’s] great example, the [military] camp became a school of virtue, as well as of military science. There were seen unshaken fidelity; unsullied honor; humane and social sympathies; pure love of country; respect for the magistracy, and reverence for the laws. He sustained the standard of American Liberty with energies suited to her character: tempering authority with mildness, bravery with discretion.

This was a testimony to the positive value of military service and in these remarks Davis reflects the majority affirmation of the solid Puritan principles that would continue to
play a critical role in the developing republic. Indeed, his note that the military camp was a school of virtue is almost certainly taken from Cromwell’s *A Soldier’s Catechism*, the primary reading material for the largely Puritan Parliamentary army during the English Civil War.

Should there be any doubt Washington himself markedly expressed the basis of his system of belief choosing to couch his thoughts in the words of the Old Testament prophet Micah in his “Circular Letter to the States” upon his final departure from command of the Continental Army. His remarks reflect a particular sentimentality that he rarely revealed and it reflects a distinctly spiritual baseline orientation as to how he ordered his life. He concluded by expressing his desire that God would continue to provide protection for the fledgling republic to:

> entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow Citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the Field, and finally that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristicks of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation.

In this pivotal address, Washington mirrors the prophet’s declaration that God has clearly revealed that which he desires from those that would serve him. That in addition to obedience to government, Americans would only prosper inasmuch as they valued justice, mercy, a profound sense of humility and the importance of approaching all in a spirit of love thus ultimately to follow Christ’s example. Many American military commanders throughout the nations’ existence have taken these words to heart and in

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many today, in an effort to hold true faith with the Army’s first commander, endeavor to practice them on a regular basis.

Perhaps nothing is more powerful in terms of proving the veracity of one’s claim, be it on an individual or national level, than the personal testimony of a disinterested or every previously oppositional entity who now affirms the great value of a product or cause. We see this in the attitudes of Germany and Japan, our former bitterly opposed and dogmatic driven Axis adversaries, who in the post-World War II era have “converted” and assumed roles among America’s closest Allies. Their participation goes far beyond the sullen acquiescence of military vanquished foes; they have enthusiastically adopted, in many respects, the democratic practices and mindsets of their American adversary.

While national habits and cultural practices certainly remain, it is through the cataclysm of war and defeat that they have seen American values and faith in action and found them to be worthy of embracing on a large scale. The American generosity proven in the Marshall Plan and even the demeanor and positive interaction with the occupying troops were tools that helped forge a surprisingly strong bond between nations that few could ever have envisioned. But that is not to say that Europe, particularly on the continent, was ignorant or entirely uninformed of the developing American nation long before this. Indeed, Puritan authors (both ministers and laity) had been extolling the success of their plantations in the New World from both a material and spiritual perspective in numerous tracts and treatises. While much of this was consumed by the English speaking audience in the home islands, it also found a large audience on the mainland as well.

Europeans were shocked and intrigued by the success of the American Revolution and what it might imply for the rest of the world. The American commitment to
republican values combined with a fierce democratic ideal proved to be a fascinating concept that captured the imagination of many. Accustomed to rigid hierarchical economic and social orders overseen by an elite aristocracy, many found the new American construct extremely compelling. It was not that any of the base concepts of freedom and individuality were new: it was the way in which they were allowed to play out in the new American paradigm that was altogether different and unusual. In particular, it was the Puritan religious aspect that contributed so much to this idea of “Americanism.” While the forms and practice of ritualistic Catholic Christianity were everywhere evident in Europe, the Puritan (and ultimately Evangelical) belief system diverged dramatically with its insistence on critical “levelling” factors to include the right of self-governance, the importance of individuality in faith with direct access to the divine and the accompanying communal trust relationships that were the bedrock of the covenanting commonwealth. These faith practices, while no longer embodied in a theocratic government by the time of the Revolution, were yet essential to the European perception of an American identity.

In the country’s earlier years, before the large scale overseas American engagements, foreign travelers perceived a sense of social equality in American society that was altogether different from their European experience. They marveled at the general commonality of all, the general absence of social stratification, marked by a lack of dramatic deference to others of a supposedly higher social caste and positive good will to all regardless of estate or income. A first hand observer to several critical decades of America’s formative years was Benjamin French, a New Hampshire native who took various civil service positions in the early Federal government. Beginning in the Jacksonian era, he served through the Lincoln Administration and captured many
intimate and revealing details of the national political scene in his *Witness to the Young Republic: A Yankee’s Journal, 1828-1870*. In it he recounts a revealing episode with a quintessential European during one of his many travels:

> From Washington to Baltimore we were in the company with Col. Achille Murat, son of Murat [field marshal under Napoleon], formerly King of Naples, & nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. He possesses all the vivacity natural to the French. He appeared to be very well informed upon every subject upon which he conversed, and I was very much pleased with him. Some allusion was made to his being a Prince—“True,” said he, “I was born a Prince but now I am more than a Prince, I am an American Citizen.”

“Exceptionalism” to this substantial European aristocrat was to take part in and become a part of an exceptional endeavor. While an interesting story in itself, this historical vignette provides a distinct insight into the European mind regarding the nature of America and what it means to be American. From his visit to America, DeToqueville noted this same “levelling” spirit of equality by his observation that “There is, in fact, a manly and lawful passion for equality which excites men to wish all to be powerful and honored. This passion tends to elevate the humble to the rank of the great.”

The establishment and control of the militia in the new republic was a significant matter of debate for those who deemed themselves advocates of more centralized national power (“the Federalists”) and those who believed fervently that any surrender of power by the states to a central government would be an abrogation of liberty and a move towards despotism. The Puritan experience played large in this context as it was events in British colonial experience that were of significant import to the American concept of an abhorrence of a “standing army”. Supposedly, the existence of an on-going “regular”

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professional army was the notion of the crown whose intent was to utilize it as a tool of oppression, imposing his will on the populace by force. Gary Wills aptly details the origins of this critical ideological conflict and notes that Parliament’s primary check on the crown was its sole power to provide tax revenue for the Crown’s purposes (to include military ventures). While over extending his criticisms of the militia concept and the influential role it played then and now, does much to dispel as mythical the notion that American’s should resist a standing professional force.

By creating a standing fund for military forces rather than temporary authorizations in times of emergency, Parliament would lose the right to authorize funding on an as needed basis, essentially losing any control over the forces raised. Their response, initially, was that the nation should rely almost wholly on the militia for its military needs. While this concept proved faulty in execution, it served an ideological tool of Parliamentary resistance to the arbitrary power of the crown. In the new American republic, it was the anti-federalist who re-iterated this same argument in resistance to the new Constitution’s provisions for federal control of the militias and the need for a standing military force. As Madison and Hamilton pointed out, however, here there was no Crown and with Congress in the role of Parliament, there was no threat to American liberty by such a force. Indeed, Parliament was essential in eventually creating a standing military force:

The objection was not to a standing army as such. The Parliament had proposed an army under its control in the 1641 Militia Bill, but the king (Charles I) vetoed that. Lois Schwoerer writes that the final success of Parliament was not the abolition of standing armies but the establishment of civilian control over the military.88

It is the early civilian control over the military that is a hallmark of both Britain and America. In addition, the on-going practice of maintain militia forces in both nations plays an essential part of that civil-societal control (the “Territorial Force” in Britain and the National Guard in the United States).

Nevertheless, resistance to the implementation of the powers of central government remains a characteristic element of the American mindset towards authority and even towards the military service at times. While a healthy skepticism is a welcome aspect of American attitudes towards power, there are those in the neo-conservative movement who vaguely appeal to the New England revolutionaries for in a misguided attempt to justify their positions. Conveniently disregarding the fact that an omnipresent, rightly ordered government and the “commonwealth” ideal of society was a hallmark characteristic of Puritan thought, they champion the liberty of individuals and corporations to an extreme.

For many years, the average American believed in an exceptionally limited role for the Federal government. It would take the effects of industrialization, a widening income gap and the devastating effects of the Great Depression to provide the impetus for a major shift in their perception and allow for a much more active role of government in daily life. While the benefits of labor laws, environmental and safety standards and other measures for the common good have been copious, in contemporary times, groups of armed individuals opposed to this exercise of power and residing for the most part in remote regions of the country have deemed themselves “militias” believing themselves to be representative of the New England institution. Their misappropriation of the title in no way legitimizes their claims. This hyper-conservative mindset misconstrues foundational
American thought regarding the proper application of collective power and the importance of individual responsibility. It is counter to the necessary trust in a centralized government that is essential to the average American’s willingness to encourage their sons and daughters to serve in the nation’s armed forces.

Cultural Transitions - Puritanism Moves South

With the passage of time, various revival movements continued to sweep across the country with varying degrees of intensity; some resulting in passionate, rational and profound effects on the communities they touched, others in brief and bizarre religious hysteria with behavior bordering on the bizarre. One perceptive (and at times peculiar) observer known particularly for his insights of his native South, followed the currents of Puritanism as it flowed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century America. In the decades since his death in 1940, his epic work, simply titled *The Mind of the South*, has served as a useful primer for all things Southern, and conversely, Northern as well.

In reference to early to the early republic’s revivals and “Awakening” movements, W.J. Cash notes (in often less than flattering terms) that Americans and southerners in particular wanted “a personal God, a God for the individualist”:

What was demanded here, in other words, was the God and the faith of the Methodists and the Baptists, and the Presbyterians. These personal and often extravagant sects, sweeping the entire American country with their revivals in the first half of the nineteenth century, achieved their greatest success in the personal and extravagant South.  

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And with the exception of few “high-toned” Anglicans, much of the south experienced a conversion in religious and moral matters that in effect, transferred the essence of New England Puritanism into the life blood of the expansive South to the extent that the faculties of almost every institution of higher education (other than the University of Virginia) was wholly dominated by evangelicals by the time of the Civil War.

Puritanism had been “re-born” in the south:

The triumph of the evangelical sects also naturally involved the establishment of the Puritan ideal. From the first great revivals onward, the official moral philosophy of the south moved steadily toward the position of that of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Adherence was demanded, and, with the exception of a handful of recalcitrant colonial aristocrats and stubborn sinners, willingly and even enthusiastically given, to a code that was increasingly Mosaic in its sternness.  

Thus, the south became the full inheritors of the potent spiritual-cultural American Puritan legacy. And if they could not find full accord on other political and economic matters and thus blundered into a tragic civil war, the believers in both regions yet maintained a commonality of faith that not even open combat could ultimately sunder. Cash notes that consequently in the North, the dogmatic Puritan mindset remained, but cooled, “remaining always a mighty force, [which] would nevertheless grow steadily more gentle, more vague, and at the same time more rational.”

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Maturation of the New England Way – Young Republic Through the Modern Era

After the War of 1812 (or the “second Revolution” as some have framed it), great parts of the most densely settled areas of America were permanently marked with a biblical mindset engendered by the Second Great Awakening. But while both North and South experienced a wide sweeping common individualistic faith experience, in the North the results were far more practical and were accompanied by a rigorous program of social reformation movements. In his perceptive and far ranging work, The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism, political science professor George McKenna notes that in much of the deep South, the social implications of religious revival were “politically sterile”:

It changed many lives in the South and left an indelible stamp on the grammar and vocabulary of southern Christian worship, but it was mainly in the North that the patriotic implications of evangelical Christianity came to be realized. Puritan theologians had taught New Englanders, in the words of [the Reverend] Peter Bulkeley, that “the Lord looks for more from thee, than from other people.” That conviction was popularized during the first Great Awakening [1730s] as ordinary people in New England realized that they too, could become active agents of New England’s salvific mission.92

Some may contend that the Awakenings were a departure from strict Calvinism while it might rather be said that they were a refinement of that foundational belief. Indeed “predestined” is a term from the text of the New Testament, not a concept manufactured by Puritan theologians. McKenna attributes the burst of social reform movements to the result of an enhanced concept of “free will” in salvation which emphasizes the role of individual responsibility in entering the covenant of grace. However, it may be that this energy was basically an outpouring of an earnest desire to please God with zealosity.

for “right living” very much as the original Puritan communities had envisioned. In short, the reformers were not necessarily on a new path; they were simply working to fulfill the original intent of a well ordered common wealth as their fore bearers had intended but with tactics that were adapted to the environment of the new American republic.

Regardless, McKenna notes that they “launched into [their task] with evangelical zeal. Culturally, often literally, they were the sons and daughters of the Puritans.” 93 Slavery was certainly the worst of the evils affecting the great republic and as the reformers and abolitionists grew consumed with its eradication, they moved inexorably towards a civil war.

It is an interesting characteristic of America’s conflicted nature that there is still great debate as to the correct terminology for the conflict of 1861-1865 and it speaks to the surprisingly lack of satisfactory resolution that still exists in the country. Despite the dominant themes presented in the overwhelming media presence in daily American life since the advent of television in the last 70 years, disparate views of the war still remain and affect our national dialogue in multiple fields including race, equality and political theories of governance. Some have noted that the idea of what we popularly term “The Revolutionary War” was in reality more akin to a “civil war.” Likewise, many southerners referred to the Civil War as the “Second American Revolution” (while northerners were more likely to refer to it as the “War of the Rebellion”). Interestingly, the 1939 edition of the Massachusetts National Guard Yearbook refers to the conflict as the “War Between the States,” a label that has come to be used almost exclusively as a southern reference to the war. While many examples of Puritan spirituality exist in the 150 year span from the founding of the Republic through the Second World War, the

most poignant instances are found in the American Civil War. At this point, the
Puritanism that had moved south with the evangelical Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians
and others meant that both northern and southern soldiers shared a common spiritual faith
which in part guided their conduct throughout and which made the conflict all the more
tragic.

Lincoln’s deliberative comments in his Second Inaugural Address speak to the
heart of the American way and the criticality of faith throughout noting that “Both read
the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the
other...The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered
fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.”

Lincoln recognized the potent and unique sense of Americanism that existed in both sections despite the blight of racial injustice
and involuntary servitude that was ultimately so counter to the developing American
way. Significantly, he does not curse the “enemy” nor use emotional rhetoric to denounce
them as unconscionable or morally bankrupt traitors who must be crushed, although he
certainly was persuaded that circumstances determined that the federal government had
to resort to this extreme measure. Ultimately, only God could answer the question as to
whether or not there had to be a civil war.

In our day, the neo-Nazis and white nationalists of abhorrent radical fringe
elements have gained national attention far beyond what their numbers warrant. An
unfortunate by product of the furor has been that dedicated southern military
professionals of superb caliber who have traditionally held great esteem in the American
military are now being mindlessly denigrated as traitors at best and Nazis and genocidal
maniacs at worst. In his seminal article on the “right view” of the war, Wheaton college

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94 Abraham Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address*, Accessed from
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln%27s_second_inaugural_address
professor Robert McKenzie addresses the root of the conflict asserting that the inflamed rhetoric of both sides is basically wrong. Both sides have cherished “myths” about their purposes and justification for the conflict which in the end are “self-serving and self-justifying, placing one or the other section in the best possible light. Both are also grossly simplistic, portraying the war as a kind of Manichaean struggle between good and evil.”

The shared sense of a common heritage in today’s American military is evident in their traditions that celebrate the triumphal battles of both sides of the conflict and is a tribute to the unique character of American service. Confederate icons Lee and Jackson are (or were in recent years) as much venerated as Grant and Sherman both in doctrinal and leadership development literature. A careful study reveals the conflict to be an embodiment of the best and worst of America’s unique character with its ultimately congenial re-union serving as a testament to the enduring values expressed in American concepts of liberty. A telling example comes from a former Confederate enlisted soldier who in later years lamented the faulty views of racial superiority they accepted in the south that contributed to their willingness to secede and lauds the Puritan spirit that was very much evident in the South’s greatest leaders:

Progress comes through evolution and revolution; where moral forces lag physical force compels the way. The only issue now is in patriotic rivalry of the sections. The heritage of one is the property of all...Still we are all proud of the hardy New Englander who makes the desert blossom as the rose wherever he pitches his tent. His hard environment has been a blessing to every other part of the country, forcing him to seek greener pastures in balmier climes, and to disseminate his energy and frugality in those more leisureful sections that need encouragement to greater thrift. It was the combined qualities of the Virginia cavalier and the New

England Puritan that made Stonewall Jackson invincible and Robert E. Lee the highest type of the American patriot.\textsuperscript{96}

It is a significant observation that religious revivalism was a distinctive feature of both the Federal and Confederate armies during the Civil War. The massive waves of conversion were particularly prominent in the South. While the full array of vices common to large encampments of young men were evident, there was an exceptional spiritual presence that reflected the enduring legacy of the Puritan way as soldiers were encourage to turn to the faith of their fathers not only to withstand the trial but to experience life more fully in the tumultuous experience of heretofore unknown army life. While the while some of the most senior Confederate commanders were fervent Christians, the bulk of the enthusiasm was in the ranks. Augmenting the armies chaplain corps were numbers of missionaries sent by various denominations across the south. Summers notes that the first missionaries deployed to the army were a group of 60 Baptist ministers and many more followed in a joint evangelical effort that saw the conversion of tens of thousands of southern troops:

The Protestant sects even worked closely together, Baptist ministers refrained from emphasizing immersion baptism, while Presbyterian evangelists de-emphasized some of their own Calvinist beliefs. ... By 1863, the Christian associations were also working closely with the official army chaplains, pooling their resources and power. The Southern evangelists seemed the most efficient and organized entity in the entire Confederacy.\textsuperscript{97}

In his extensive work, \textit{The Great Revival in the Southern Armies}, former chaplain William Wallace Bennett relates the 1863 report of a Baptist missions coordinator which states in terms reminiscent of the ode to Washington’s army that “On the crest of this


\textsuperscript{97} Summers, "The Great Harvest: Revival in the Confederate Army During the Civil War"
flood of war, which threatens to engulf our freedom, rides a pure Christianity; the gospel of the grace of God shines through the smoke of battle with the light that leads to heaven; and the camp becomes a school of Christ.” Despite shortages of every necessary good in the blockade-starved Confederacy, Bennet notes that massive amounts of gospel literature, hymnals and New Testaments were published and distributed. The Virginia Baptist Board reported that sixty missionaries had been sent to the camps distributing more than forty types of tracts totaling six million pages while the “Evangelical Tract Society”, an ecumenical effort by various denominations in Petersburg, VA, reported printing and distributing almost five hundred million pages of tracts and materials by the war’s end.\(^98\)

While recent controversies abound in regards to how Confederates should be commemorated (if at all), Lee and Jackson and their military exploits served as archetypal examples of the ideal American military leader. Many commanders on both sides of the conflict were known to be enthusiastic proponents of the Puritan/evangelical tradition which made the conflict all the more poignant. Perhaps most iconic West Point graduate and professional soldier Thomas Jonathan Jackson known to posterity by the sobriquet “Stonewall” which was bestowed by an admiring fellow commander at the Battle of First Manassas/Bull Run. It was the name by which his old brigade was known throughout the war and the “Stonewall Brigade” is today the legislatively authorized title for the Virginia National Guard’s 116th Brigade Combat Team. His doctrines and battlefield exploits are today studied at military institutions around the world.

Orphaned at a relatively early age, Jackson found a home in the Army and some of his first extensive exposure to religion was via the Episcopal West Point chaplain (the

\(^98\) William W. Bennett, The Great Revival In the Southern Armies, (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1877), 75-77.
predominant sect in the army at that time). As a decorated artillery officer he was intrigued by the richness of the Catholic traditions he experienced in the post Mexican War occupation but was determined to find the most scripturally oriented faith group. He search eventually occasioned a spiritual conversion and re-birth that he found in the biblical Calvinism of his Scotch Presbyterian roots. He approached his faith with the same soldierly determination that characterized his military career. While an instructor at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia (named in honor of the battle and town in Massachusetts) he became a fixture in the Presbyterian Church. In a move that proved unpopular with some locals, the future Confederate commander established an immensely popular Sunday school for area slaves that was seen by some as on the verge of challenging legal authority. In regards to this irregular event, pre-eminent Civil War scholar James I. Robertson notes that:

In Jackson’s mind, slaves were children of God placed in subordinate situation for reason only the Creator could explain. Helping them was a missionary effort for Jackson...He learned and used the name of each of his students [the popular class numbering over 100 at times]. They in turn affectionately referred to him as “Marse Major.”

To some degree, the Institute was influenced by a strong religious influence including the substantial numbers of Scots/Presbyterian settlers in the Shenandoah Valley. The statue of first superintendent Francis H. Smith, a West Point graduate, devout man of faith and gifted mathematician, portrays him bearing a Bible in his grasp and the four smooth bore artillery pieces prominently displayed on the parade ground are titled “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John” after the four gospel writers.

Throughout the conflict in which he gained military immortality, he lamented the drawn out struggle but was determined that peace should only come with the independence of “his country.” Jackson gave testament to his personal faith in a conversation with his staff physician, Dr. Hunter McGuire (the namesake for today’s Veterans Affairs hospital in Richmond, VA). Reflecting Puritan/evangelical themes, Jackson was a “know so” versus a “hope so” sort of personal faith particularly in regards to his eternal state. He adamantly declared that there is no dread of eternal damnation in true Christian faith noting that “I have no fears whatever that I shall ever fall under the wrath of God. I am as certain of my acceptance, and heavenly reward, as that I am sitting here.” Upon his untimely death on the evening of his greatest military victory at Chancellorsville, the contents of his personal effects were preserved and are today on display at the VMI museum which significantly includes a number of the gospel tracts that he carried to share with his men in his desire to lead them to knowledge of salvation. In his thought provoking dissertation regarding the admixture of Puritan and chivalric archetypes in the American mind, William Strawbridge relates a telling article from a post-war Confederate periodical that alludes to a similar Puritan mindset held in common by both regions of the United States:

According to an author in The Confederate Veteran, Jackson’s family could be traced to “the hardy borderers of NorthBritain” known for their “devoutness,” “bravery,” “thrift,” and “inflexibility of purpose” among other traits. This scribe even argued that “in the South, and as much in Virginia as in Massachusetts, “a genuine Puritanism has always held sway,” as Jackson and his lineage evidenced.101

100 Robertson, Stonewall Jackson, 635.
The other iconic Southern military figure, Robert E. Lee, derived from old Anglican stock of Virginia’s gentry, seems to identify more with the cavalier than the Puritan image. Nonetheless, his devotion to duty, single minded piety and great affinity for the likes of General Jackson reflects some essential facets of regard for the Puritan tradition. He held daily devotional services with his family and his faith was well known if not reserved. This juxtaposition of the complimenting and yet competing concepts of liberty are part of the complexity of the American narrative as David Hacket Fisher relates in *Liberty and Freedom*. Lee, like Washington after whom he modeled his behavior in part, strove to maintain a pronounced sense of Stoic self-control and “his struggle for self-mastery was translated into Christian terms of sin and redemption. It was also a Christian idea of selfless service to others, but always without an idea of equality.” Incidentally, Fisher also notes that “Lee never defended slavery and always believed that ‘slavery as an institution is a moral and political evil in any country.’”

While Lee certainly made some ungracious remarks regarding the descendants of the Pilgrims (the Yankee troops he fought), he did not denigrate the Pilgrim fathers themselves. By the 1950s after decades of reconciliation, President Eisenhower, who prominently displayed Lee’s portrait in the Oval Office was moved to say by way of explanation that Lee was “...selfless almost to a fault...noble as a leader and as a man, and unsullied as I read the pages of our history. From deep conviction I simply say this: a nation of men of Lee’s caliber would be unconquerable in spirit and soul.”

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Puritan Heritage and Post World War Two Global Engagement

At the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States found itself in drastically altered state than the grinding years of the Great Depression would ever had admitted less than a decade before. Winthrop’s metaphorical city of faith was now on the highest hill on the planet and what America did then (and does now) was watched closely by all. Accordingly, for a number of reasons, Americans shouldered the burden of global engagement, in part because of the increasing threat presented by international communism and also due the vacuum left by rapidly declining colonial powers such as Great Britain (whose naval and land forces had served to some degree as the policeman of the world, insuring safe navigation and working to diffuse international conflicts while at the same time working to serve their own profit driven ends). The United States found itself in an unprecedented position of global leadership, struggling to define the parameters of its responsibilities as well as how and to what degree it should interact with other nations. In this strange new global construct with its limitless opportunities and its disturbing threats, many American military and political leaders would turn to aspects of their Puritan heritage to ground them and provide a philosophical point of reference from which to guide their actions. The massive waves of immigration at the turn of the century changed the face of the nation and brought new challenges to the cherished principle adopted at the birth of the country *E Pluribus Unum* - “From the many – One.” To
maintain that concept of unity which provided a sense of national purpose, cultural
gatekeepers continually emphasized the traditional elements of the American narrative
that was firmly grounded in its traditional Anglo-British political and religious heritage
(sometimes at the expense of other important contributions from Hispanic, African-
American, Asian and other peoples). In the twenty-first century, increasing efforts in
diversity and inclusiveness provide corrective notes in Army history which now
celebrates the earliest militia presence in the Americas via the Spanish settlements in
Florida (although they did not maintain an unbroken organizational heritage). The degree
to which the nation promotes or denigrates its pre-dominant founding Anglo heritage may
a matter of on-going public debate but America’s unique practical and historical ties to
Great Britain and other commonwealth nations are indisputable. Unique military to
military arrangements exist with these nations via the STONEGHOST protocols that
classify critical operational and intelligence documents with a standard acronym which
denotes “Releasable to the US, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New
Zealand.”¹⁰⁴ In concert with these nations who are all significantly informed by the
Anglo-Puritan experience, America determined to engage in its “pre-destined” purpose
(according to some) to secure liberty and promote democratic values in the world with
the US military in the van guard.

To be sure, many faith groups returning to traditional isolationism were not at first
enthusiastic about the new demand for a large, professional standing military (none too
impressed with the perceived degradation of morals experienced by the massive citizen-
soldier military of the late war). However, in addition to a wave of evangelical religious

¹⁰⁴ T.J. Keating, editor, US Department of Defense Joint Publication 2-01Joint
and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations, (Washington DC: Government
revivals that swept the nation in the 1950s, many began to be convinced of a moral imperative to engage actively against the rising threat of godless totalitarianism.

Mikey Weinstein, the anti-proselytizing activist, former Air Force officer, and head of the “Military Freedom Foundation” provides a substantive documentary of the events in the era that saw a remarkable interjection of old line Puritan faith ideals in the American military. He notes in The Birth of the Christian Soldier: How Evangelicals Infiltrated the American Military that previously, conservative evangelical groups such as the Church of the Nazarene were leery of encouraging service in the potentially morally degrading atmosphere, but the “Red Scare” and the ensuing state of national mobilization moved them to conclude that "The stricken nations are looking to the free world . . . we are our 'brother's keeper.'"\(^{105}\)

During this era, the South increasingly became the center for American conservatism and the more traditional concepts of the American way in an unusual mental shift. Traditionally the strong hold of the more liberal Democratic party (particularly the more conservative “Dixiecrat” wing) deep-seated political conservatism has mandated gradual assumption of a Republican party identity there and in other “red state” areas of the country. McKenna contends that southerners and Roman Catholics, particularly in the aftermath of the Civil War were relegated to an “outsider” status as the Puritan/northern mindset of the victors held sway over much of the nation. However, I believe it would be more accurate to say that Puritanism was always strong in the south in terms of spiritual fervor but that the social welfare and national identity traits of

American “civil religion” had markedly less impact in for many years. McKenna refers to this phenomenon as the “great switch.”

It is hard to imagine this today, when churchgoing Catholics and southern evangelicals have become America’s most enthusiastic supporters, and therein lies a double irony. In the writing and researching of this book it became increasingly clear to me that a great switch has occurred in America. Over the past century, particularly since the 1950s, the elements of the American population whose patriotism, rightly or wrongly, was once suspect have now fully internalized the Puritan vision of Americans as a people with a providential mission, even as this vision has faded in the historical areas of Puritanism and the Puritan diaspora (New England, the upper Midwest, and the northern Pacific Coast).

Americanism gained an increasingly spiritual hue as senior leaders unabashedly proclaimed their reliance, essentially, on the principles that drove the Puritan settlers in New England. In the Journal of Military History, author Anne Loveland described the recasting of the ideological war in strongly religious terms and the birth of the new “Character Guidance” program that was instituted throughout the Army in 1947. The program lasted in various forms until its demise in 1970. The blocks of instruction were presented by Army chaplains with soldiers receiving several hours at induction and participated in the mandated sessions in their follow-on unit assignments as well. One session “entitled "The Nation We Serve" described the United States as a "covenant nation" which "recognizes its dependence upon God and its responsibility toward God." While chaplains were careful to avoid the preference of any one denomination over another, the program bore spiritual overtones and assumed that virtue in the ranks began with faith in God. On the national scene, the religious awakening that was everywhere evident gained powerful support in the example of the American Commander

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in Chief and former European Supreme Allied Commander, Dwight Eisenhower who at one point, while being:

\[\ldots\text{frequently praised as "the focal point" of the spiritual awakening, expressed one of its cardinal notions, that religious faith was an essential component of Americanism, in his famous statement: "Our Government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith."}\]

Those commanders and senior leaders who had already been grounded in their Puritan/evangelical past, while not actively proselytizing for the most part, readily encouraged the work of the chaplains and the agents of various evangelical groups who sought to introduce covenant faith concepts throughout the military. Loveland goes on to note that a great number of the nations’ political, economic, and military leaders saw the communist threat as essentially a religious in nature; that communism itself constituted a form of religion with man at its center rather than a transcendent being. In the context of an era that produced the Army “Character Guide” program, significant leaders did not shy from publicly stating what they believed was truly at stake in the grand contest and what they believed was the essence of “Americanism”:

David E. Lilienthal, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, both warned Americans against relying solely on military force in the struggle against communism. The "true sources of America's strength," they declared, were not "material things" but rather what Lilienthal called "the spirit of this nation . . . the faiths we cherish," and what Dulles termed "spiritual forces" and "the faith which in the past made our nation truly great."

Carefully avoiding any hint of sectarianism, the chaplains charged with executing the program nonetheless readily reflected the values on which Winthrop and Bradford and other early New Englanders placed a high premium.

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To this day there is a significant presence in the American military of leaders that hew expressly or culturally to many of the core tenants of the New England way (accountability, personal responsibility, corporate action for the common good etc). The thriving “Officers Christian Fellowship” has multiple retreat centers and Bible study/fellowship groups at every service academy and on almost every major installation. A like organization for the enlisted ranks, “The Christian Military Fellowship” promotes active spiritual/warrior lifestyle in the enlisted ranks. External ministries popular on many college campuses today, such as “The Navigators” found their start in focusing on developing study and recreational groups for spiritual strength building and “discipleship” on approximately 70 military installations. Leaders and proponents for these groups came from some of the most senior echelons, including the ranking officer of the entire Defense Department and were determined advocates of virtue and faith as essential to the very best of American style military leadership. Weinstein notes that:

It was inevitable, considering the concerted effort by evangelicals to penetrate every echelon of the service, from the lowliest barracks to the loftiest policy-making aerie, that there would eventually emerge a cadre of Christian officers emboldened to openly profess their faith and use the full influence of their rank to bolster the cause. Among them were such high-profile figures as Army general William Harrison, dubbed the Two Star Evangelist by the press in recognition of his status as one of the nation’s first bona fide born-again celebrities.

Among these senior leaders was four star ranked and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Harold Johnson. Johnson had an incredible warfighting record having fought the Japanese up to the bitter surrender of Corregidor, enduring the tortuous Bataan Death March and ensuing imprisonment, combat assignments in Korea and service through the Vietnam conflict. In Weinstein’s recounting, this venerable warrior was adamant that the best leadership qualities of the American military were spiritual in nature declaring among other things that:
"Christianity is the very foundation of military leadership." The four-star general would regularly deliver addresses with titles such as "Turn to God," proclaiming, "There is a special need for the soldier to understand the strength and purpose that can be provided by a deep and abiding faith in our Father through His son, Jesus." Only Christ, according to Johnson, could provide "the inner strength that is essential to meet the wide variety of conditions encountered in the environment of the warrior."  

There is no doubt that General Johnson would have felt quite comfortable in the ranks of the Bay Colony militia. His way of warfighting, to a large degree, was very much the New England way. In his retirement years, Johnson would serve as executive officer of the “Officer’s Christian Fellowship” working to develop spiritual networks and study/fellowship groups in conjunction with local churches and the chaplains at military installations around the world.

Another senior commander known for espousing the tenants of the Puritan way was a former Delta Force commander, commanding general of the US Army “John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center” and Department of Defense Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Lieutenant General William Boykins. Boykins, an avowed evangelical, had been criticized by some religious liberty groups for his negative aspersions of Islam. One particular comment made during the early days of the Global War on Terror that drew particular ire was in regards to a Somali warlord who had stated that Allah gave his forces protection from the Americans to which Boykins made this comment: "Well you know what I knew, that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol." At the time, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld disregarded protests noting that traditional American freedoms allowed for such individual expressions of faith.  

110 David Seay et al, “Birth of the Christian Soldier”  
context might have more fully illuminated, and whatever effect it may have had on relations with the Islamic community, there are a significant number of military members, officer and enlisted, who are in full agreement with his sentiments.

Puritan Resurgence in the Post-Vietnam/Global War on Terror Era

America today has any number of friends, allies and enemies in the world and a number of simply fascinated observers. The “idea” of America, has had a significant impact, for better or worse, on the entire global community; in any number of positive currents of which Jonathan Winthrop would have rejoiced but also in neutral or negative tones as well. In *God and Gold*, Walter Russell Meade makes a poignant commentary as to the state of affairs that lend to this global discontent. He notes particularly that large parts of the world have replaced the “Anglophobia” with a virulent anti-Americanism partly because:

Under contemporary conditions America is everywhere that the goods of the modern consumer economy penetrate and everywhere that electronic waves can carry the messages of the contemporary media. In virtually every country of the world powerful sections of both public opinion and the elites have bought into a program of “Americanization” – economically if not politically...There is a spiritual aggression, a conquest based on consumption...”¹¹²

But in the final analysis, whether it is a revulsion (or supposed revulsion) with modern American culture and mores, or a rejection of modern western democratic values, he notes that something “very important has been at stake in these frequent conflicts between, the English-speaking societies and their neighbors and rivals. It is, at bottom, a

¹¹² Meade, *God and Gold*, 75.
religious conflict.” In this, he is not at all speaking of a triumph of Christianity over the non-Christian world but of a rational view of faith that is in conflict with non-compromising religious zealotry. To be sure, “non-compromising” is an admirable trait when applied in proper contexts (particularly from a warrior perspective), but when taken to extreme - whether it is a “religion” of secular Communism, radical Islam or any other belief system, it will clash with the values of a distinctly spiritual but evolved Anglo-American world. The agents most capable of constructively engaging with these countries are those most imbued with the remnants of Puritan religious values thus relating on a faith to faith basis or at least providing a ground for altruistic dialogue and the just application of force if necessary.

To be sure, the existence of religious influences, to a greater or lesser degree, in military personnel and institutions throughout the world is hardly a remarkable phenomenon. But the extent to which a potent religious influence distinguishes and defines the intent and practices of a military force does make it remarkable. Like David Hackett Fischer, who documents enduring Anglo influence in practices, taxonomy and material culture in Albion’s Seed, my intent is not to argue for the superlative values of the Puritan influence in America’s military, merely to suggest that it does exist and that it continues to lend a specific overtones to its organizational character. The radical Islamic adversaries in America’s most recent military forays readily label US and British forces as a Christian/crusading horde. While they may fail to discern Protestant versus Catholic distinctions, they do believe that an animated and fervent Christianity is the driving force in America’s scheme to subdue Islamic nations. While most believers in the leadership and in the ranks, as fervent as they might be, are baffled by and opposed to this

\[113\] Meade, God and Gold, 79.
contention, it yet remains that the American military has been empowered by its peculiarly Puritan past, particularly in the post-Vietnam, Regan era resurgence.

International journalist and military policy strategist Robert Kaplan, provides a perceptive view from the field on what makes the American military unique (having visited and embedded with US troops in numerous countries around the globe) in his incisive book, “Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground.” Kaplan’s premise is that the demise of former empires and the fall of the Soviet Union have generated numerous areas of conflict and uncertainty across the globe. This unstable environment has generated security fears which have in turn served to motivate the Americans to even greater engagement in far flung areas of the world with a presence that is reminiscent of all empires; an isolationist policy of sorts that is in fact an effort to create absolute security at home. This presence, like the ancient Romans, appreciated in some quarters and deeply resented in others. Since he published this work in 2005, many of his conclusions continue to be borne out by events such as the “Arab Spring” and the growing nuclear aspirations of Iran and North Korea.

Kaplan’s narrative(s) revolve around personal encounters and experiences with all ranks but more particularly with the middle and lower level troops that make up the bulk of America’s fighting forces; particularly the more elite special operations organizations of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. In his travels, he provides strategic and historic context to each theater of operations and zone of conflict while attempting to capture the motivations and insights of average American military professionals (as well as mobilized National Guard and Reservists). In juxtaposing traditional/historical exercising of imperial power and America’s unique role in the 21st century he relates the mindset of one introspective Marine Corps officer in that “The Romans, by their rites of purification,
accepted and justified the world as it was, with all its cruelty. The Americans, heir to the
Christian tradition, seek what is not yet manifest: the higher ideal.” Rather than
resigning ourselves to an embattled state and employing our superior technology for the
sheer sake of exercising power, Americans are compelled by a fundamentally different
mindset that is the result of the explicitly religious aspect of our founding in the Puritan
colonies. It is a concept that in its idealized form, applies force judiciously for a higher
good; in effect, to promote and accomplish the will of God in the material world. It is this
which impels a significant number of spiritually oriented young Americans to view
military service as a higher calling and as an opportunity to do good in the world through
the exercise of warfighting power (or even the threat of this power).

In a unique and nuanced view of the influences of the New England way on the
American way of war, researcher Ronald Lorenzo examines the current American
military justice system. In his The Puritan Culture of America’s Military: U.S. Army War
Crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, Lorenzo asserts that there are indeed trace elements of
Puritanism in the military mindset. In his analysis, the American military is consumed
with what he calls “Puritanical revenge” in which “there is an apparent infinite desire for
revenge – and deaths – in the wars waged in Iraq and Afghanistan” by America’s
“Puritan armies.”

He attempts to collect and evaluate certain trends and phenomena through the sociological methods of Emile Durkheim and informed throughout by Max Weber’s classic The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. While displaying a
novice and dramatically critical view of the American military, he nonetheless reliably

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captures some elements of persistent Puritanism. He makes a sound case that just as the old belief system has markedly influenced the economic and market systems of the United States in the modern age, so too does the military continue to be influenced by the Puritan ethic.

The development of a “post-emotional” American civil-religion looms large in his study. While New England Puritanism and its fervent, emotion driven belief system have long passed, the form remains in a coldly calculative mindset that seeks to ruthlessly administer justice and conduct warfare without the restraints provided by the earlier, original compassion evoked by the faith. While innovative in some aspects, Lorenzo’s reasoning reflects a very dark and short sighted logic that completely disregards the dynamic Puritan faith system that remains very much alive in its numerous evangelical off-shoots. To consider these faith groups “post-emotional” and calculative is exceptionally misinformed at best. Lorenzo concurs that there is indeed, an American civil religion that is essentially Puritan in its forms and affects. He notes particularly, that the American military, in its traditions, “sacred texts” (field manuals), ceremony and hierarchy is an essential part of the practice of that civil faith. His does enumerate some of the socio-religious aspects of the American military noting for example:

Military bases, in a way, are temples of U.S. military civil-religion. Military bases in the United States are named after sacred figures of American civil religion or American military religion, which often overlap. Thus American military bases carry names of national or military heroes or civic “saints,” such as Ft. Carson (named after explorer and frontiersman Kit Carson), Joint Base Lewis-McChord (named after the explorer Meriwether Lewis and U.S. Air Corps COL William Caldwell McChord) . . .[not to mention Forts Jackson, Lee, Bragg, Benning and Hood – all formerly Confederate officers]

Lorenzo follows with a block of text from Max Weber who equates the professional military lifestyle, existing in seclusion in barracks etc., as “the perfect counterpart to the existence of the monk”. While an apt relation between the military and religious world in
general, the lifestyle of the abbey and convent were far removed from the vibrant life of Puritan communities and do not readily apply to the American experience.\footnote{Lorenzo, \textit{The Puritan Culture of America’s Military}, 134-136.}

Americans have a relatively unique base of experience when it comes to engaging foreign cultures. The large scale evangelical missionary efforts of the nineteenth century added had a significant effect (if subconscious) on the concept of engaging foreign cultures. In like manner, American warfighting professionals on diplomatic-military assistance missions around the world have become adept at identifying what practices work and don’t work in regards to developing relationships and implementing policy within other nations and cultures. The experience of these military advisors gives them an special understanding of the uniqueness of America and its way of war and how its principles might advantage other nations. The effectual tenets of this mindset are physically embodied and conveyed across the globe, not necessarily by high-ranking generals and admirals but by mid and lower grade professionals who connect with their hosts on the ground on a daily basis. Kaplan relates an illuminating encounter with a well-traveled, pragmatic senior Army advisor posted to the broad strategic state of Mongolia in 2004. Wilhelm noted that in developing nations, American foreign policy is defined and implemented at the “fingertip level” by majors and senior NCOs (thus the adoption of the term “iron major” which denotes the level of influence those in this upper mid-grade rank hold). Intense examination of those factors during an extensive Army career led Wilhelm to the inescapable conclusion:

The full flowering of the middle ranks had its roots in the social transformation of the American military which...happened a decade earlier, when the rise of Christian evangelicalism helped stop the indiscipline of the Vietnam-era Army. This zeal reformed behavior, empowered junior leaders, and demanded better recruits,” he said. “For one thing, drinking stopped, and that killed off the officers’ clubs, which, in turn, broke down barriers between officers and non-
commissioned officers and changed the recipe for junior leader development. Our noncoms gained the confidence to do the jobs that those of higher rank and experienced had previously done. Our majors do the jobs of colonels in other armies: our sergeants perform like captains.

Seemingly insignificant alterations of previously approved social behavior (the generally elaborate officer clubs, a fixture on every post, were absolutely forbidden territory to the enlisted ranks and vice versa) were actually signs of a re-adherence to the Puritan values of previous eras.

The moral fundamentalism,” continued Wilhelm, a liberal who voted for Al Gore in 2000, “was the hidden hand that changed the military for the better. But you try to get someone to admit it! We never could have pulled off Macedonia or Bosnia with the old Vietnam Army. It lacked the discipline and talent to abide by the restrictive ROEs and complex political-military battlefield.  

The sense of discipline engendered by this shift to more traditional faith based patterns during a critical peace-time re-building era, particularly among the mid-rank company and battalion level leaders and troops, had far larger complications that impelled and literally enabled the US to implement global strategies that were previously unfeasible.

Coincidentally, Baptist missionary to China, John Birch, literally fused the military and gospel mission concepts by accepting a commission in the Army Air Corps after helping rescue Col. Jimmy Doolittle and his crew after the raid on Tokyo. He served capably in combat against the Japanese and as a ground intelligence officer, liaison and minister to the nationalist forces until his death at the hands of the Communist faction in 1945.

Military professionals have also worked to encourage the existence of democratic regimes and convey American values in Latin America with varying success via the DoD’s “Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation,” which, until 2001, was known as the US Army “School of the Americas” training to military and police forces.

from across Central and South America. While critics claim that the institution endorsed torture techniques in its curriculum, defenders claim that this was not the case and that an academic entity cannot be held accountable for the conduct of its attendees. Through the years, various administrations have instituted rigorous policy reviews to insure that the positive values of the American experience including the rule of law and the valuation of basic human rights among others are rigorously promulgated arguing that many in these nations would know little or nothing of this values if not exposed to them at the institute. The support for the institute as a means for influencing neighboring nations remains a topic of debate.

Researchers studying the current generation of Soldiers have found surprising result to their inquiries regarding faith and service. Expecting the cohort of Millennials to be overly cynical and imbued with the “God is dead” mentality of their post-Vietnam era parents they found that the passionate faith of the first generation of New Englanders is yet very strong in today’s ranks in Iraq and Afghanistan. Researcher Stephen Mansfield embedded with various commands in the combat zones and in state side installations and found that “The surprising phenomenon of the Millennial’s approach to religion, of the American twenty-somethings’ spiritual search, is its level of intensity and passion.” He witnessed multiple formal and informal gatherings for worship and team building. Mansfield notes the much of this spiritual resurgence began and was evident during the First Gulf War in which:

The U.S. Army Central Command (ARCENT) sponsored 7,946 religious meetings with an attendance of 341,344 soldiers. This evidence of a new religious fervor moved Major General Barry McCaffrey to remark that “we had the most religious Army since the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War.”

Why Soldiers Serve—The Leaders, the Led and the Intangible “Will to Fight”

There are any number of reasons as to why young (and sometimes not so young) Americans volunteer to serve in the Armed Forces. Patriotism, family traditions of service, adventure, economic advancement or educational benefits, escape from an undesirable situation— they span a range of motivations. But regardless of the catalyst that drove them to a recruiting station, once they enter the service, everyone begins a process of “re-creation” to become an American warrior. Puritan teachers and modern evangelicals alike would largely correlate spiritual conversion with the experience of becoming a modern, professional warrior that former military psychologist Robert Lifton describes:

Beginning with basic training … war [and military service in general] is an “initiation process, a symbolic form of death and rebirth … [wherein the] civil identity, with its built-in restraints, is eradicated, or at least undermined and set aside in favor of the warrior identity and its central focus upon killing.”

While Lifton points to the harshest end state task of any military member (taking life), his statement may be tempered with a broader reference to the sense of selfless service and dedication to duty that every re-born/newly born service member experiences. The new identity of the warrior is formed in part, not by losing self-restraints per se, but by disciplining oneself to respond rapidly to orders, operate responsively within a larger group and master one’s skill at arms to engage the enemy via repetitive techniques resulting in a most effective “muscle memory” method of response.

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119 Lifton in Tick, War and the Soul, 49.
In reality, it is the dogged determination to perform one’s duty that is at the heart of the American warrior identity (whether it be standing guard, marching long distances in grueling terrain, pulling a trigger or clubbing an enemy combatant with a rifle stock). The willingness to do physical harm to an enemy is the potential necessary end state of all soldiering but it is not the “goal” of the professional soldier. The Marine Corps powerful maxim readily applies here that regardless of one’s individual skill set (or “Military Occupational Specialty” ie rifleman, mechanic, clerk, cook etc.) “every Marine is a Rifleman.” The US Coast Guard employs the equally powerful and motivational maxim that “every Coastguardsman is a lifesaver.” Regardless, the emphasis here is on the new identity that an individual assumes as a result of their entering the service.

Former Army Ranger and West Point faculty member Dave Grossman perhaps put this best in his “Sheep – Wolves – Sheepdog” analogy of military service:

If you have no capacity for violence then you are a healthy productive citizen: a sheep. If you have a capacity for violence and no empathy for your fellow citizens, then you have defined an aggressive sociopath—a wolf. But what if you have a capacity for violence, and a deep love for your fellow citizens? Then you are a sheepdog, a warrior, someone who can walk into the heart of darkness, into the universal human phobia, and walk out unscathed. Everyone has been given a gift in life. Some people have a gift for science and some have a flair for art. And warriors have been given the gift of aggression. They would no more misuse this gift than a doctor would misuse his healing arts, but they yearn for the opportunity to use their gift to help others. These people, the ones who have been blessed with the gift of aggression and a love for others, are our sheepdogs. These are our warriors.\(^{120}\)

The American way of war embodies warriors as the “sheepdogs” of society. A non-compromising belief in fundamental values and a solid sense of self-identity as warriors

with a special past thus enables a sense of resilience in soldiers that is critical in their ability to “walk out unscathed” from the trauma of warfare.

Dr. Don Snider, Senior Fellow in the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) at West Point (and retired faculty member) with three tours as a combat infantry officer in Vietnam, addresses the contribution of personal morality (often faith based) to the critical matter of resilience for individual service members. In “A Soldier’s Morality, Religion and Our Professional Ethic,” published by the US Army War College’s “Strategic Studies Institute,” Snider joins with Colonel (Retired) Alex Shine, also a decorated combat infantryman, to address what they perceive as a growing hostility by some elements of the military services’ leadership towards the free expression of traditional religious practices, warning that:

The Services can ill afford to lose the irrefutable power of soldiers’ personal moralities as they serve in both peace and in war, providing an additional motivation and resilience to prevail in the arduous tasks and inevitable recoveries inherent in their sacrificial service.\textsuperscript{121}

The authors maintain that in order for the Services to maintain their existence as effective profession it is critical that the “Stewards of the Profession” maintain the trust of the society they were created to serve which includes the dynamic faith practices of a large segment of it including leaders and the led. They note that current Army leadership doctrine includes a legal and a moral structure that defines the sources of character and basis for right practices embodied in “The Army Ethic.” Yet it is the aspirational features of the moral foundations that give it life and drive the service towards professional

excellence rather than the legalistic obligatory measures that simply make for the existence of a large, bureaucratic institution.

American warriors follow commanders who are steeped in the Army leadership doctrines which place great emphasis on “character” as an essential attribute that all leaders are expected to possess; character based on “Army values, empathy, warrior/service ethos, and discipline.”122 Because quality leadership is vital to effective mission command, the Army prides itself as the subject matter expert on leadership and the premier in institution in the nation for producing professional leaders. The Army’s foundational values infused in every Soldier are contained in the “LDRSHIP” (leadership) acronym:

- **Loyalty**- Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, the unit and other Soldiers
- **Duty**- Fulfill obligations and accomplish tasks as part of a team
- **Respect**- As in the Soldier’s Code, treat others with dignity; appreciate the best in other people
- **Self-less Service**- Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own without thought of recognition or gain
- **Honor**- Live up to all the Army values
- **Integrity**- Do what’s right, legally and morally
- **Personal Courage** Face-fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral); standing up for and acting upon the things that are honorable.

This emphasis on character as a mandatory element of what the Army expects its leaders to “be” and “know” is not necessarily a common theme in other world militaries.123 The


values bear some striking similarities to the Puritan ethic of the New England way that undeniably contributed to their formation. According to this guidance, Army leaders have a responsibility to “steward the profession” and maintain its organizational values that extend back to the founding of the Army on Cambridge Common in 1775 and the core beliefs of the Bay Colony militia who composed the bulk of that force. The Army “statement of belief” is codified in the “Soldier’s Guide” which references “spiritual fitness” as integral to the art of good leadership, reminding all soldiers that:

The warrior ethos concerns character, shaping who you are and what you do. It is linked to Army values such as personal courage, loyalty to comrades, and dedication to duty. Both loyalty and duty involve putting your life on the line, even when there’s little chance for survival, for the good of a cause larger than yourself. That’s the clearest example of selfless service. Soldiers never give up on their comrades and they never compromise on doing their duty. Integrity underlies the character of the Army as well.124

A large number of commissioned officers are produced each year by the service academies, but the majority of officers are trained via the ROTC programs at civilian universities across the country. Evangelical schools, with their generally enhanced valuation of selfless service and dedication to foundational national values increasingly serve as a prime source for these officers. An example is Liberty University (LU) in Lynchburg, Virginia, which is the largest evangelical institution of higher learning in the nation. The school boasts a thriving Army ROTC program, among others, with a corps of cadets established on the campus in 1983 at the insistence of local mega-church pastor school benefactor and nation-wide religious leader Jerry Falwell. Reflecting the majority faith composition in the armed forces, LU today is hosted by a Southern Baptist Convention affiliated church but is itself, a non-denominational campus that welcomes professed believers from all Christian faith groups. The cadet population outnumbers its

host institution, the University of Virginia, by an almost two-to-one margin and has featured pro-military functions such as “Military Appreciation Week” and a mission to the military outreach program since its inception in 1971.

Whereas American society may be roughly divided into various purpose groups (in tribal terms) such as shopkeepers, mechanical technicians, educators, counselors, laborers etc., only a select few comprise the “warrior class” of the tribe (currently less than 1% of the total population). Yet, the Puritan way emphasized the New Testament themes that all believers, in effect, belong to the warrior class. In like manner, the apostle Paul taught that all believers belonged to the “priestly” class as well (among other identifying characteristics of the adherents to the New Testament faith). In effect, this blurred and reduced, to a surprising degree, the traditional demarcation lines of authority and position in the Hebrew world introducing an element of egalitarianism among believers that was entirely unknown under the old covenant. Modern evangelicals do celebrate this concept of “universal service” in teaching, preaching and song eg. “Onward Christian Soldiers”, “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the Cross!” etc. For a nation with a traditional aversion to the idea of a standing military force, this bears overtones of a somewhat militant and radical lifestyle that the religiously complacent would not heartily endorse in either a literal or figurative sense. But in a remarkable secular parallel, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., affirmed the existence of a traditional American warrior mentality when he famously declared in his speech to a group of soldiers on the eve of the invasion of Europe in 1944 that “Americans love to fight, traditionally. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle.”125 In this statement (albeit directed toward American males), he was drawing on the very real

125 George S. Patton, Jr., Speech to American Soldiers On the Eve of the Normandy Invasion, June 5, 1944, Accessed from http://www.5ad.org/Patton_speech.htm
existence of an idea ingrained in the national psyche that the love of battle in a righteous cause is indeed a fundamental part of the American identity.

A feature of military service that is akin to the demands of Puritanism is the sense of orderliness and definitive purpose that participants experience. In modern America, as indeed in much of the Western world and in underdeveloped countries as well, younger generations are increasingly plagued by the lack of a sense of a grander purpose, a lack of conviction; the “general calling” that provided a comforting sense of structure and value in the Puritan communities. Military service is one of the few accepted domains in American society (though unfortunately yet denigrated in some circles) that still unapologetically demands that participants voluntary forgo self-interests and unfettered self-liberty for sake of the protection of— not the president nor the people— but the principles embodied in the US Constitution, the document that, in conjunction with the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights serves to define the nation’s values and purpose. Most military members thrive on the orderliness, sense of routine and stability that military service provides. That, coupled with challenging training, deployments to sometimes exotic locales and a general sense of positive energy that pervades most units (and found on military installations in general) creates a unique atmosphere experienced in few other circumstances. Likewise, most Veterans report that there is a similarly positive atmosphere markedly evident in the Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, clinics and Veterans Counseling Centers, places which serve as “safe havens” of a sort and where Veterans may experience a sense of shared comradery.

While some are so enamored with this warrior lifestyle that they will serve for the full twenty years that qualifies them as a military retiree (the “lifers”), most members serve a two or four year enlistment and return to ideally contribute the positive values
they’ve learned and skills they’ve gained back to the common good of the nation. Some will suffer tragic injuries and the unseen wounds of war (traumatic brain injury, debilitating combat stress or in relatively rare but persistent episodes of soldier on soldier violence or military sexual trauma), the burden of which military families must bear making them willing or sometimes unwilling adjunct members of the service as well (“when one serves, we all serve” is a common theme. Most service members, however, will exit the service with an advanced maturity and a positive sense of “post traumatic growth” having developed a sense of self-worth and the knowledge that they are capable of accomplishing and overcoming far more than they might ever have imagined.

Another hallmark that today’s military shares with the New England Puritans is a distinct sense of community based not on tribe, race or social ranking but on a shared sense of identity and authentic purpose derived from one’s “conversion” or “enlistment” into the church or armed service. One of the reasons that the Puritans were able to successfully “mobilize”, “deploy” and “occupy” a completely new region with absolutely no infrastructure is because they held to a compelling cause in which unified them. In their concept of reality, all of history is moving to a climax/conclusion and God has a purpose for everyone in this grand plan. Because great things are at stake, all believers were called to live their lives purposefully and circumspectly; if not taking some highly active role in community affairs, to be at least steadfast and cognizant of the higher spiritual world and conflict that surrounded them and to live accordingly. Their purpose was not to seek salvation, as some have supposed, but to live out the truths of the salvation they believed they had already come to possess; they were a people who were not withdrawn from life, but lived very much in the present. Boorstin alludes to this sense of orthodox surety noting:
…what really distinguished them in their day was that they were less interested in theology itself, than in the application of theology to everyday life, and especially to society. From the 17th-century point of view their interest in theology was practical. They were less concerned with perfecting their formulation of the Truth than with making their society in America embody the Truth they already knew. Puritan New England was a noble experiment in applied theology.\textsuperscript{126}

Boorstin refers to the Puritan experiment as a movement long expired, as do most other others historians. It is critical to note, however, that their intensity and the dogma that animated them in the seventeenth century is still very much alive in the multitudes of their evangelical descendants who work ceaselessly to realize the dominance of biblical principles in American society. From another angle, the Puritan zeal of the “crusading” social reformers of the nineteenth century is also evident in the multiple social justice causes that are a daily feature of life in the twenty-first century. While there has been no shortage of zealous religious sects convinced that they were sole possessors of “the truth,” Puritan convictions somehow instilled a purpose driven mentality in the American national psyche that still defines our society, including our military forces to this day.

As previously noted by Tick and others, the believer and the warrior gain a new identity of sorts upon accession to the military/spiritual family of which they are now a part. The “family” metaphor as a means of describing evangelical/ Puritan societies has also been an increasingly commonly accepted concept of military service as well. While the “band of brothers” soliloquy that Shakespeare so ably crafted has been a theme since time immemorial, its specific application and implications has become an increasingly defining factor in the US military particularly with the return of the all-volunteer force after the soul wrenching experience of America’s failed involvement in Vietnam.

To be sure, not everyone’s personal family experience is empowering or preferred. However, military members overwhelmingly report a profound sense of

\textsuperscript{126} Boorstin, \textit{The Americans: The Colonial Experience}, 5.
belonging and devotion to each other’s welfare that reflects the best of “family values” and most feel some sense of loss upon completing their service (for some it is debilitating). Like any close family, soldiers are intimately involved in the lives and activities of their fellow warriors. The nature of their service, extended deployments in difficult conditions with virtually no privacy encourages the development of uniquely close bonds both in the combat zone and at the home installation where the families of service members are known for their steadfastness to one another as well. This lends to the accountability and the practices of the tight-knit Puritan communities where an individual’s business could be everyone’s business (!). Interestingly, this does not always accord with the supposed cherished American value of rugged individualism. Perhaps this would fit with the experience in the Virginia colony but certainly not with the “common wealth” focused nature of the Puritans.

With the familial identity comes a unique sense of pride and personal development (as per the Army’s 1970s recruiting slogan “Be All That You Can Be!”). In accord with the Puritan spirit, this pride of belonging is unique in that it is neither vain, self-serving nor arrogant (in its best form), rather it is based on a new found valuing of self (ideally in a healthy, constructive sense), of one’s community (fellow warriors, unit, congregation) and of organizational/national purpose. Though there is an empowering sense of being set apart for a special purpose -just in the New England way- pride of service is far from being domineering or elitist; indeed, one of the first lessons drilled into the psyche of every recruit is they must show the utmost respect for any civilian they encounter, always addressing them as “sir” or “ma’am” (the same honors rendered to officers) for, as they are often reminded, it is the American taxpayer who is their employer(!). Ultimately, it is a pride not based on individual superiority, but couched in a
sense of gratitude for the opportunity to serve and to be part of something greater than oneself.

Without question, whether one enters enthusiastically or reluctantly, serving in the military makes a fundamental impact on the service member that is life-long. Having spent any amount of time in the armed forces is significant event that, to some degree, creates a different, altered state of being. Having become a Soldier, one can never again fully return to the un-initiated state of being that is the purview of the civilian life; upon leaving the military, one has become another being - a Veteran. To their credit, the military command structure has increasingly recognized that fact and has begun to accept some responsibility for the long term well-being of its former members. During the decades of constant Cold War readiness and global engagement since the end of the Second World War, Americans have gradually began to shed their foundational aversion to a standing army and have taken increasing pride in the professionalism of her armed forces. This acceptance and the development of modern psychological well-being concepts has resulted, in the years since the height of the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict to the Marine Corps development of its innovative “Marine for Life” program. Not to be outdone, the Army has followed suit with its “Soldier for Life” program, both of which recognize an obligation to remain in some contact with their former members and work to assist their re-integration into civilian life. Focusing on employment, education and partnership with community agencies, they build on and augment the essential programs already conducted by the healthcare and benefit programs that the US Department of Veterans Affairs has been providing for generations of Veterans since the First World War. A select cadre of active duty Marines and Soldiers operating from the Pentagon,
regularly canvass large segments of the continental US and some foreign countries in an
effort to insure the quality of life and well-being of its former warriors.\textsuperscript{127}

The military world is generally divided into two segments: the commissioned
officer ranks (to include the mid-level technically oriented world of “Warrant Officers”) and bulk of the services - the enlisted ranks. Most officers receive a commission upon the graduation from one of the service academies, from the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at a civilian or military college or from attendance at an Officers Candidate School (OCS) (a very few receive direct commissions for their special skills or through appointments due their medical or legal skills). While the term “Soldier/s” in the military environment commonly refers to the enlisted ranks, at the heart of the matter, every member of the US Army is, indeed, a Soldier. And significantly, the Army emphatically declares that every member, whether officer or enlisted, regardless of the motivation for serving, must understand that our shared American military heritage is fundamental to our existence as a warfighting force. This message is replete throughout the Army doctrinal works from the apex of the Leadership Strategy down to its introductory text for all new members–Field Manual 7-21.13, entitled \textit{The Soldier’s Guide}, a comprehensive encapsulation of the purpose, structure, programs, benefits and requirements of the US Army the heart of which is its historical legacy:

The Army’s institutional culture is fundamentally historical in nature. The Army cherishes its past, especially it combat history, and nourishes its institutional memory through ceremony and custom. Our formations preserve their unit histories and proudly display them in unit crests, unit patches, and regimental mottoes. Such traditions reinforce esprit de corps and the distinctiveness of the profession. Our history of past battles bonds and sustains units and soldiers.

\textsuperscript{127} US Army Soldier for Life Program, Accessed from https://soldierforlife.army.mil
History reminds soldiers of who they are, of the cause they serve, and of their ties to soldiers who have gone before them. As Americans, Soldiers and service members are initiated into service, they are developed and molded at every turn with the concept that they are a professional force that serves a higher cause and this gives their service exceptional meaning, in peacetime and war time. Just as the Puritans asserted that life was not to be compartmentalized and that a living faith was to inform every aspect of their existence, so too must the professional Soldier abide continuously in the ways of the Army ethic as Snider and Shine note:

Put simply, to be an authentic person of character, the individual Soldier and leader must live, on and off duty, consistently with his or her understanding of right and wrong—the individual integration of personal morality and the professional ethic.

On a personal note, the author had occasion to observe Colonel Shine’s professional ethic served as an example to the thousands of young Soldiers undergoing basic and advanced infantry training at Ft. Benning, Georgia in the 1980s. While serving as the Infantry School Brigade commander, Colonel Shine directed that the drill instructors halt the use of some of the more coarse marching cadences, knowing them to be an affront to many of the Soldiers forced to voice them and not in accordance with professional Army practices (an example of the good order exercised in the Bay Colony militia and codified by George Washington’s general order directing Continental Army troops to avoid the “foolish” and “low” use of profane language that harmed the American cause). This relatively minor proscription from a senior officer far removed from the lower ranks


served as a notable example of the Army ethic to young trainees and was, perhaps, reminiscent of the enduring legacy of New England way in its propriety.

The officer corps, and to a lesser degree the senior non-commissioned officer corps, has traditionally been the gate keepers of Army culture, values and standards. While always seeking to prepare to fight the next conflict and staying abreast of the latest technological developments and sociological phenomenon, senior Army leaders strive to maintain that critical sense of historical continuity that provides a cultural stability throughout the force. In a sense, through the Army values, leadership doctrine and customs, they maintain and modify the image of the ideal American soldier to which all service members aspire. The intense Puritan heritage in American culture is readily adapted to and is truly foundational to the identity of the “good Soldier” even if only in latent form. As a result of this influence, American military leaders are generally guided, with noted exceptions, by a distinctive precept of a “servant” style of leadership, in reference to Jesus pronouncement in the Gospel of Matthew:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.\[131\]

The leadership method that Christ directs is counter-intuitive to what many in the civilian world have come to believe is the norm of American military command (thanks to Hollywood and other sources of popular culture). Yet is an idea that is readily practiced

\[131\] The Holy Bible, King James Version (New York: American Bible Society), Matthew 20: 25-27
both in the military and is even a doctrinal feature in the Department of Veterans Affairs “National Center for Organization Development”.\textsuperscript{132}

Most Americans hold a profound regard for their military and its leaders due in part to the sense of a higher calling that the institution has come to embody from the Puritan era to the present with the notable exception of the Vietnam era. The establishment of the service academies and the advent of military staff schools aligned with the successive phases of an officer career served to mature the professional nature of the armed forces. As the role of the Puritan minister was considered a higher calling that precluded serving in political positions, in the American military tradition, serving military officers are prohibited from publicly endorsing or engaging in partisan political activity or unduly influencing those under their command. When the America national leadership gathers to hear the president present his “State of the Union” address each year (as mandated by the Constitution), the Congressional chamber erupts in applause on numerous occasions, with varying enthusiasm depending on the party in power, except for the military service chiefs lead by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, usually seated at the front of the room. Their elevated calling precludes any show of political partisanship and they traditionally sit stoically throughout only responding to the occasional positive reference to the armed forces. That aura of superlative values and competence is a standard which most have maintained to the extent that military service has almost become a pre-requisite for those seeking the presidency. As Boorstin notes:

Starting with Washington himself, America would offer again and again...examples of men whose fame on the battlefield eventually led them to the highest civil office. Even in Great Britain ...military men rarely became prime

ministers; turning military success into a political career was almost unheard of there. But in America this became common...Some of these men had begun, not in the ranks of the regular army, but in the local militia. And their military exploits – far from seeming mere success in a specialized profession – actually attested their success as undifferentiated Americans. Precisely because there was no military caste, the citizen-soldier easily found a place in American political life.\textsuperscript{133}

This is an example of the paradox of the American way that various historians and sociologists have puzzled over for generations: a nation that resists stringent forms of authority and concentration of power but celebrates the benefits of orderly control and discipline. Both of them with roots in the New England way now find expression in the American way.

Evidences of the Puritan/New England way can also be detected the moral practices of America’s military. Warfighting is at heart a vicious, gut level affair and some opponents (and proponents) argue forcefully that morality has little to do with it. From Calvin onwards, Puritans have posited that all of life is a struggle, that God directs all of human activity and that there is a proper way and a faulty way to approach all of life’s undertakings. While there are numerous accounts of atrocities and acts of brutality committed by American troops throughout the nation’s history, by and large, the American military has a reputation for being markedly moral force; a reputation that has been critical to establishing trust necessary to America’s numerous bi-lateral relationships across the globe. There are countless examples throughout warfighting history that bear testimony to the unique character of America’s Puritan influenced soldiery.

The Civil War era provides numerous accounts of barbarity and nobility. The raid by Confederate guerillas on Lawrence, Kansas was one particularly notorious engagement in bitterly contested border lands between free-state Kansas and pro-southern

\textsuperscript{133} Boorstin, \textit{The Americans: The Colonial Experience}, 372.
Missouri where no quarter was asked or given by either of opposing forces. With the larger campaigns being fought farther south, large bands of Southern irregulars supported by family and friends contested Federal control of western Missouri, an area composed largely of Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian affiliates. Inflamed by atrocities of US troops (real and fabricated) feared partisan commander William Clarke Quantrill, massed an unusually large formation to force a major battle and strike a blow at Lawrence, Kansas, the symbolic center of the Federal oppressors. Catching the city completely unawares but finding few troops to engage, they turned their fury on the citizens of the town in a whirlwind of destruction and slaughter. And while approximately 150 men and boys were shot down (most unarmed), moral restraint too was in force as not one female—black or white—was molested or assaulted “on pain of death” as per Quantrill’s orders; indeed it was almost unheard throughout the entire region (this at a time when rape was a relatively common occurrence among European armies in like circumstances). This marked difference in behavior might also be compared this to the atrocities committed by Japanese troops in Nanking in 1937 or the Russians entering Berlin in 1945. One of the few buildings the raiders did not destroy happened to be the town’s “Plymouth Congregational Church.”

Individual Initiative – Corporate Responsibility

An on-going matter of discussion in military thought regards the role and value of individual initiative as opposed to the virtue of acting immediately and virtually without

thinking for the corporate good. While perhaps not immediately evident, upon closer examination there are noticeable similarities between the need to practice individual faith and a corresponding value of participating in a faith community as exemplified by the Puritans. The challenge in forging a disciplined force starts with basic combat training that seeks to overcome the individual’s innate tendency towards self-preservation by instilling a desire and ability to act on the orders given without hesitation to accomplish the greater good of the assigned mission. Consequently, the baseline for initial entry training is a reduction of the sense of self and the creation of a corporately responsive individual as reflected in the lyrics of a popular World War II song “I’m Just a Dog-Faced Soldier,” in which the recruits declare: “On all the posters that I read it says: "The Army builds men," So they’re tearing me down to build me over again . . .” It was striking for the author to observe that as part of the “deconstruction” process in creating the warrior identity during basic combat training, all civilian possessions, clothing or other personal possessions were prohibited for several weeks with virtually no exceptions but for one – troops that chose to do so where allowed to keep personal Bibles (and presumably other religious texts).

With an increasing loss of concern for subordinating one’s desires to act on behalf of the common good and focus on the needs and desires of the self as promoted in many forms of popular cultures, it is becoming increasingly difficult to inculcate this critical aspect of military efficiency. And yet a hallmark of American military service is that while soldiers are trained to respond to orders and perform efficiently without hesitation or questioning, they are also known for their ability to think independently and exercise
initiative if called for in a particular situation. It calls for a balance of discretionary judgement and determined discipline.

This juxtaposition of self and the community was a central facet of daily Puritan life as well. Far from creating unthinking religious automatons, or entirely banishing any sense of the self, the Puritans sought primarily to put the self in proper relationship with God’s design. Noted Harvard sociological historian Sacvan Bercovitch developed a critical understanding of this unique construct in Puritan thought and noted that:

As the Puritans developed and amplified the conflict, self-versus-God became the motivating force of their activism… Most amply, it appears in the self-compounds which they added to the language. Those that define the damned include self-affection, self-confident, self-credit, self-fullness, self-honor, self-intended, self-practice, self-safety, self-sufficiency.

Bercovitch goes on to relate a portion of Puritan intellectual, Rev. Richard Baxter’s address entitled “The Benefits of Self-Acquaintance” in which he states:

“Man’s fall was his turning from God to himself; and his regeneration consisteth in the turning of him from himself to God…. [Hence,] self-denial and the love of God are all [one]…. Understand this and you will understand what original and actual sin is, and what grace and duty are…”

And as Bercovitch concludes “The basis of Puritan psychology lies in this contrast between personal responsibility and individualism.” This ability to balance individual faith and judgement while being committed to act for the corporate good no matter the cost is an underlying mindset inherited from the Puritan experience which contributes to the American military mentality today. Many pop culture songs, films and some aspects of modern psychology vigorously celebrate a rather petulant sense of self-serving gratification as an ultimate ideal. Opposed to this “self-first” mentality are the more traditional American virtues embodied in the “US Army Values” which acutely reflect

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this dedicated “team first” mindset and promote “self-less service” as one of their seven hallmark principles. Indeed, the idea of applauding a “what’s in it for me” ideology is repugnant to most soldiers which regularly puts them out of sync with an increasingly alien civilian culture. Indeed, the lessons of service before self and “putting my buddy first” is so ingrained in the military psyche that it is sometimes difficult to convince American Veterans to utilize their VA benefits and services because they fear that they might be preventing a fellow Veteran more in need from receiving them.

As the American military became increasingly involved in the conflict post-French colonial Vietnam, the Military Assistance Command staff began gathering enormous amounts of data on North Vietnamese regular and local insurgent troop strength, capabilities, equipment, resources, dispersion across the battle space and a myriad other details. By applying scientific methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation, the Americans hoped to achieve a decisive edge in forcing the flow of the conflict in both their and the Diem government’s favor. As the South Vietnamese government troops provided the bulk of combat capability, American intelligence analysts provided support in the form of detailed studies of their capabilities and performance. But the Americans were increasingly puzzled as the conflict escalated instead of diminishing and their extensive data analysis failed to adequately predict events.

According to Ken Burns in his recent documentary, “The Vietnam War”, then Secretary of Defense McNamara wondered aloud as to their failure to grasp what was happening despite the wealth of data and skilled evaluation. The simple response of Ed Landsdowne, long time special operations officer, Air Force major general and CIA

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operative seasoned in Asian affairs, was to ask if anyone had taken the time to ask how the South Vietnamese *felt* about all of this.”137 This was a critical missing factor in truly understanding the nature of the conflict, which at the time, was deemed intangible and not of particular significance in the Military Assistance Command’s considerations. Their approach spoke more to “military science” rather than the “art of war” and in time, this mechanistic approach it cost the United States dearly.

Interestingly, it is the complex and sometimes difficult to define matters of “feelings” and national passions that leaders and policy experts should keep in mind in applying military force in the world. This is the same critical question that must be considered as we attempt to understand the “passions” that drive the modern military. Historians contribute to that effort by attempting to capture historical/cultural narratives from our shared story and apply them to our understanding of who we are and why we fight (or perhaps who we should be). While there are many capable “clinical” historians who summarize and recount the political, economic and strategic trends across time to explain what Americans have done and how the US forces have developed materially and tactically (Weigley, Utley, Mahan, Millet, Maslowksi among others), there are few who have sought to consider how the American soldiery “feels/felt” and how the intangible impacts the tangible and practical. This would seem to be a critical part of enabling the grand design in the Army leadership doctrine to “counter their ideologies with our history” and more fully comprehend the shared values to which leaders must ascribe to successfully apply the American way of war. Again, as Snider and Shine assert in the Army War College’s “Professional Military Ethic” series:

> ... it is simply indisputable that religion is often a key element in the emotional and psychological health of individual Soldiers. While the Army and the other

137 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, *The Vietnam War*, Film released 2017
Services have recently struggled with just how to understand and present this spiritual domain of the human, moral essence in all Soldiers, its force in the strength of their personal character and resilience, both on the battlefield and thereafter, is not questioned.\textsuperscript{138}

Regardless of whether the troops are Guard, Reserve or Regular Army, the underlying motives for many are undeniably spiritual in nature. One such vignette is provided by a senior Army officer who, having completed his military career, gained a medical education and entered the foreign mission field as an evangelical care giver. Some had questioned his logic in making what would seem to be an unusual post-career choice and the former US Army major general related that as a young combat infantry commander in Vietnam, he had been powerfully impressed by an interaction with one of his NCOs, an avid evangelical Christian who had volunteered to serve in country. Perplexed by the soldier’s determination to deploy to a combat zone, he asked him what his motivations were and the young sergeant unhesitatingly replied that his faith taught him that although war was a dirty, dangerous and violent business, it was a necessary task and given its foul nature, perhaps only the best in character should be performing this duty. This is a common precept among many currently serving troops and commanders.

Consequently, the Veterans community serves as a continuation of the presence of the military in American culture. A significant percentage of currently serving troops credit the influence of Veteran family members and respected elders as essential to their decision to serve themselves. In recent years, the effusion of military/Veteran focused faith based organizations (FBOs) reflects the enduring presence of the faith driven service in the ranks of the military. In 2015, the federally funded Forces and Resources Policy Center of RAND’s National Defense Research Institute published a study concerning the purposes and needs of FBOs, finding that:

\textsuperscript{138} Snider and Shine, “A Soldier’s Morality, Religion and Our Professional Ethic,” 20.
Perhaps not surprisingly, a major focus of FBOs’ support for veterans is related to spirituality or religion. Guiding this work is the belief that veterans’ experiences while in the military may have created spiritual wounds that FBOs are uniquely qualified to address. As one interviewee put it, “We believe war is a spiritual issue, best solved through spiritual healing, and that comes best from the faith community.”

Just as military chaplains are an essential element in the overall effectiveness of American warfighting commands, so too are the Department of Veterans Affairs chaplains who minister and mobilize community caregivers to fulfill America’s commitment to care for her warriors. This existence of this critical need in the Veteran community is testament, in part, to the enduring spiritual legacy of Puritanism in military service.

American Military Spiritual Demographics

As Fischer so ably documented in Albion’s Seed, the existence of historic place names serve as touch stones linking us in powerful yet intangible ways to our cultural roots in Old England. Perhaps the most clearly identifiable trace elements of America’s Puritanism in the military can be readily seen, not in the material structurers or historical place names, but in the touchstones of their spiritual place names. The US military has been extremely proficient at collecting data on its personnel particularly since the Second World War. As the American establishment accepted its new role as a global leader, it developed extensive agencies and departments to track the data necessary to

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139 Laura Werber, Kathryn Pitkin Derose, Mollie Rudnick, Margaret C. Harrell, Diana Naranjo, Faith-Based Organizations and Veteran Reintegration: Enriching the Web of Support, (RAND Corporation, 2015), 4.
administering a professional modern force. Of the select data elements that have been selected as primary identification traits of the individual American service member is religious affiliation – as a spiritual place name - is prominent.

One of the enduring common concerns of anyone committed to combat (regardless of rank) is the loss of personal identity via death or catastrophic maiming. The dread of dying in action with no means to identify one’s mortal remains was and remains a matter of distress that has been dealt with by any number of means. But it was not until the First World War that metal identification disks worn by a string or chain around one’s neck came into common usage in the US military. By the advent of the Second World War, the military had adopted a standard rectangular metal tag issued in pairs with a beaded metal chain that remains a standard issue item to this day (affectionately called “dog tags”). Seasoned ground combat troops have adopted the practice of tying one tag into the laces of their boots to insure identification should their demise be catastrophic. There are four elements of critical information that Americans have deemed critical to individual warrior identity that are imprinted on the tags: 1) Name (last, first, middle initial), 2) blood type, 3) Social Security number (previously a generically issued “service number”) and – 4) religious preference.

Religious preference is consequently, one of several standard data elements captured from enlisting or commissioning military members. Including this data makes it clear to service members that the military establishment understands and readily supports that spirituality and faith practices remain critical to a large majority of Americans. Including this on the identification tags is meant to accommodate any faith specific requirements in regards to spiritual administrations by clergy in preparation for
or as a result of death. But it also serves as a constant reminder that the American military, by and large, is an organization that seriously includes faith affiliation and practices as a significant matter. One of the first matters of conduct impressed on the mind of every recruit is to literally never be found without your dog tags (eating, sleeping, and showering, on and off duty).

Other uses of data serve to help determine the appropriate staffing for the chaplain force. According to the figures from the Department of Defense 2009 Military Manpower Survey, approximately 74% of the total active duty military force professed some form of religious belief. A little more than 1 million of the 1.4 million person force identified with some form of Christianity (71% of the force). In an increasingly secularized western world, the numbers of American troops positively identifying with a faith group are a telling comment on the spiritually oriented nature of the force. Of particular note are the Protestants, many of them evangelical descendants of the Puritan tradition, which wield an extensive influence as they dominate the Christian segment with a 71% majority (if we include those who identified as “Christian, No Denomination”). Baptist believers alone, among the most closely affiliated of the Puritan splinter groups, account for 45% of all those who identify as one of the ninety odd Protestant denominations listed; the majority of these are affiliated with the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention.\textsuperscript{140} In an interesting follow-on, a “Christianity Today” article reported in April, 2015, that the number of those Soldiers identifying as Southern Baptist had dropped and that those claiming to be

atheists now slightly outnumber this denominational group. What the article fails to note is that there had been a 30% increase of number of non-denominational Christians while the number of Southern Baptist chaplains has not changed at all. More recent reports indicate that at least four of every ten soldiers entering service hold to an evangelical faith. New recruits, for altruistic reasons or otherwise, have been less inclined to identify their specific affiliation so a new “Faith and Belief Code” as the chaplain corps now terms the list of recognized faith groups (which now includes atheist and “heathen” among others), has been implemented to tailor the corps to the body of troops it serves.

Markedly, Southern Baptist chaplains far outnumber all others:

About 3,000 chaplains serve across the Armed Forces, and for years, their makeup has not mirrored the military’s overall religious demographics, nor America’s. Though nondenominational Christians, nones, and Catholics are the most popular religious groups in the military, Southern Baptists have at least twice as many chaplains as any other faith, with non-SBC Baptists and Catholics behind them.

The preponderance of Southern Baptist chaplains may not be so unusual given that a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Rev. Robert Welch, is a decorated, prior-service Army Ranger and Special Forces trained Soldier and was wounded in action in Vietnam.

The demography of the military’s corps of chaplains further adds to the picture as it reflects the overall distribution of faith groups throughout the services. On occasion, when some groups have had difficulty providing the number of chaplains authorized for


their denomination, agencies such as the National Association of Evangelicals have been authorized to fill those allotments with their candidates. On the whole, over 200 Christian denominations are represented. According to another the Defense Manpower report in 2009, the Southern Baptist Convention provides, by far, the largest number of Army chaplains with 787 serving ministers. The Roman Catholic Church is a distant second with 350 chaplains and among the remainder, evangelicals, both from within and without the Puritan tradition are heavily represented by the United Methodist Church with 274, the Evangelical Church Alliance with 174, the Assemblies of God with 153, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with 149, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America with 128.\textsuperscript{143}

Persistent Practices and Embedded Belief Systems

Morality in warfare is a matter of constant debate. Those who claim that there is a defined order in the universe imposed by a transcendent deity are usually more willing to insist that there are corresponding “laws of war” by which virtuous warfighters must abide. Others see warfare as a realm of chaos and destruction where any action is justified for the preservation of oneself and kin. Those with a more secular world view claim a sense of pragmatism that assumes that belief in a fundamental underlying morality in warfare is absurd or misguided at best while faith driven leaders contend that armed conflict is most realistically conducted only when approached through a construct of moral absolutes that direct behavior regardless of the “fog of war.” Princeton philosopher Michael Walzer notes the growing intensity of that debate particularly today in the

\textsuperscript{143} Defense Manpower Data Center, August, 2009, Accessed from https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-military-chaplains/
increasingly asymmetrical conflicts that have been a large part of modern warfare since American entered Vietnam. Quoting Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong who said during the years of his guerilla fighting, “We have no use for asinine ethics,” Walzer notes that moral theorists, like the idealistic military strategists who are frustrated at the demise of their plans by the harsh realities of combat, “...must come to grips with the fact that his rules are often violated or ignored—and with the deeper realization that, to men at war, the rules often don’t seem relevant to the extremity of their situation.”

To provide additional insight in this complicated matter one must consider the existence, despite the protests of some, of the undeniable selfless moral features such as extensive compassion (mercy) have been readily evident in the American way of war. It is a sentiment that is uniquely engendered by those who believe they have received compassion instead of condemnation and potential destruction. Former Japanese soldier Tsuruji Akikusa tells first hand of the American sense of mercy that was so foreign to the brutal Bushido code of the warrior. One of the last surviving defenders of Iwo Jima, he remains amazed at a culture that could wage war relentlessly yet be possessed by such a sense of mercy such that not only was he not killed or tortured when captured, he was carefully nursed back to health and restored to his family. Again, while not uncommon to most religious constructs this sense of mercy is particularly true of the Puritans whose resulting sense of compassion has tempered the more avaricious aspects of social Darwinism and America’s enchantment with free range capitalism. Recognizing that this is a complex matter, many traditionalists yet assert that championing the best values of the New England way is non-negotiable if America is to thrive and retain any sense of her ideological identity.

It is interesting to note that the first purely American military experience was the occasion of its militia forces engaging in non-traditional asymmetric warfare with the indigenous peoples which provide some lessons learned for the modern military. Additionally, today’s 75th Ranger Regiment inculcates the core maxims of New England militiaman, Robert Rogers whose 1757 “Rules for Ranging” are still an integral part of their core identity and reflect the lessons learned from guerilla style warfare. While Native Americans were not the politically driven non-state actors encountered in post invasion Iraq and Afghanistan, there are yet a number of useful parallels to be considered in those conflicts. For a true study of American counter-insurgency operations, the “Border Wars” of Kansas and Missouri provide an excellent reference in which there are a number of surprisingly similar themes shared by Southern partisans, who believed they were maintaining a superior way of life against oppressive foreign invaders, and some Islamic extremists in America’s on-going conflicts in the Middle East.

Another distinctive feature of military service is the defined hierarchy of military leadership. In New England communities, militia leadership positions were highly prized and obtaining one was a step towards or affirmation of upward social status. The first Bay Colony units determined to select their own leadership via local elections that reflected the wishes of all the “freemen” in the town. This was eventually restricted to just the militia members themselves. In a power sharing agreement with the central government represented by the Great and General Court, locally selected officers had to be finally approved at the provincial level – and they invariably were. Interestingly, this same method, roughly, continues to be practiced in Army Guard units across the nation. Officer and non-Commissioned officer leadership is usually determined within a closely knit
geographic region which is often the area over which the battalion or similar level command is spread.

Local leadership boards exercise some degree of democratic choice by selecting company grade leaders for promotion and placement with the state command and ultimately the federal authority (held in the department of the Army) reserving the final right of approval—which they invariably do. Of particular note are those very few National Guard units who have literally maintained this early New England practice of selecting their own leadership by popular vote of all the unit members. One example is the “First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry,” whose official designation is Troop A, 1st Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, a major command of the Pennsylvania National Guard. Apart from these fascinating anecdotes, much of the administrative features of the early militia have been subsumed into the creation of the regular forces and likewise, regular Army standards have come to be implemented in detail across the National Guard as a result of the Militia Act of 1903 and its culmination in the establishment of the Militia Bureau of the War Department (today’s “National Guard Bureau”) in 1916 which created the format of Guard training much as we know it today.

A hallmark of American service (both militarily and politically) is that it encourages fervently held belief systems by its leaders that held in a state of balance and consideration of the larger world around them. Military leaders, at least in the past, could support within reason, traditional faith practices as they contributed to military effectiveness. That tradition seems to be increasingly challenged by zealous and

\[145\] First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry, Accessed from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Troop_Philadelphia_City_Cavalry
ahistorical reformers with little regard for tradition or culture who promote a concept of the American way that is exceptionally vague and without standards or constraints. The task for the faith oriented military professional (or even those who hold no particular faith) is to hold their sentiments authentically without forcing it on their subordinates as generations of devout American warrior leaders have done before them.

Material and Symbolic Legacies

To even the most casual observer, it is obvious that symbols, banners, uniforms, formal ceremony and martial music in general play a critical role in the military world. These objects and cultural media serve to exhibit the spiritual foundations of military service. Certain color schemes in any media are likely to automatically draw the attention of those who have served; olive drabs, red, white and blue combinations and even the green and yellow of the former Republic of Vietnam which will catch the attention of any Veteran who served there. A careful examination of the material culture of the American military reveals some traces of the Puritan mindset that created it. Sometimes that unique tradition is indicated not by overt symbolism but by what it is noticeably absent. For example, the belt buckle of every German soldier in the heinous Nazi military regime was stamped with the words “Gott Mit Uns” (“God With Us”), while nothing of the kind existed then or now in the US uniform inventory.

Though notably influenced by their Christian heritage and with a large evangelical presence in the ranks, in all the vast array of American unit heraldry (patches, regimental crests, squadron insignia) there are virtually no religious references or indicators. However, other than an occasional embedded historical emblem (e.g. the cross
of St. George on the regimental crests of the 182nd Infantry Regimental and the 211th Military Police Battalion reflecting their English heritage), Christian crosses and emblenage are noticeably absent. This stems in part from the influence of early Puritan/Baptist spiritual leaders such as Roger Williams. Williams, after a break with the church in Boston had gone to Salem where he was enthusiastically welcomed. During his tenure he insisted that it was inappropriate to conflate the secular state and its “papist emblem” with the pure church of Christ, a message which moved former and future Governor John Endicott to remove the cross from the militia company’s flag in 1635 leaving a plain white canton on field of British red. Though initially censured for this act, the General Court followed suit and removed all crosses from the Bay Colony militia flags.

An exception is the marked reference found to the Puritan past in the emblem of the Joint Force Headquarters of the Massachusetts National Guard which features a sword bearing arm extending from a cloud in an overhead striking posture (much like the revered sixteenth century militia company flag of the town of Bedford which is the defacto emblem of the town and is ensconced in the town library). In heraldic terms this is known as the “sword arm of God” representing the Almighty’s presence in the cause of the troops bearing it while to generations of Guardsmen it has been popularly known as the sword of Myles Standish, the commander of the Plymouth Colony militia. Another New England banner with marked Puritan overtones is that of the colony and now the state of Rhode Island which employs an anchor that recalls the Puritan message that Christ was the “sheet anchor” or the ultimate anchor of salvation. As David Hackett
Fisher notes, all these emblems were used by Cromwell’s New Model Army and “became part of New England’s complex imagery of liberty and freedom.”

Another residual element of Puritan emblemage can be found in the distinctive unit insignia (DUI) of the 182nd Infantry which is essentially the old seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony – a shield with a stylized American Indian holding an arrow pointing down for peace in one hand and a bow in the other. The original seal granted by Charles I included a ribbon with the words “Come Over and Help Us” indicating the missionary purpose of the original settlers (the flag of the commonwealth is a modernized version of the seal). At the time of the revolution, reflective of their pronounced but conservative military heritage, the formerly Puritan polity adopted a Latin motto - "Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem" – meaning "By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty" which is still its official motto. In addition to this enduring graphic emblems and text, the Massachusetts National Guard (MA NG) maintains another tradition from the New England militia era in regards to its manner of alerting its troops for domestic or international contingencies. Such rapid alert measures were utilized in calling the militia to duty for events such as the “Lexington Alarm,” the name locals used for the calamitous events of April 19th, 1775. While other state militias utilize an “alert roster” (the emergency phone contact for all unit members), the MA NG continues to use the colonial era “alarm list” to call its members to duty.

Physical muster sites and ceremonies from the Puritan militia era are preserved and celebrated today throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. On the first Monday in June, the “Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of the Massachusetts Militia” conducts its “drum head” election and newly appointed officers are installed by

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the governor or the commonwealth as it has done every year since it was chartered by Governor Winthrop in 1638. At this event, they are attended by ceremonial units of the “Centennial Legion of Historical Military Commands” as well as by actively serving units of the Massachusetts National Guard. Initially designated as the “Military Company of the Massachusetts,” its current title was adopted from a phrase in a June day sermon given by a Puritan minister in 1737 and it served as the militia’s officer training command until the early twentieth century. Continuing this tradition of close historical association in the Army officer corps was the admission of the first female members admitted in 2013 among which was a currently serving Army Guard officer and Iraq combat veteran. On June Day the military commands and historical units march from their armory, which has been located in the top floor of Boston’s Faneuil Hall since 1746, to the militia’s historical muster field on Boston Common. Likewise, numerous town commons are extent throughout much of New England and were the sites for muster of the militia’s “Trained Bands” which now assemble in National Guard armories often quite nearby.

Other early New England military commands which serve as part of the commonwealth’s militia system include the “National Lancers,” a mounted voluntary unit that perpetuates the history of the Governors Guard since its founding in 1837. As a unit and individually, it has served in multiple conflicts in American history and has been called to State Active Duty to provide perimeter security for marshalling areas during events such as the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston. The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment, whose legacy as the first officially authorized force of African-Americans organized in the north was commemorated in the 1989 feature film “Glory,” was formally reactivated by the governor and the adjutant general in 2008 in
accordance with Department of the Army force structure provisions as the state’s honor

guard command. While not from the Bay Colony era, it owes its existence to the

enthusiasm of reformed Puritans who championed the abolitionist cause. Approximately

one hundred twenty Army Guardsmen drawn from various units across the

commonwealth have volunteered to affiliate with this “additional duty” command,

conducting funeral honors for upwards of 3,000 veterans each year similar to those

conducted by 3rd US Infantry at Arlington National Cemetery. The regiment is

commanded by a colonel and an operational staff of currently serving and retired officers

and NCOs and its modern day soldiers regularly march alongside their living history

compatriots of Company A, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, a local

non-profit unit which has been incorporated into the regimental structure.

The First Corps of Cadets of the Massachusetts militia was formally organized in

1741 as a guard for the royal governor of the Province of Massachusetts. Being

composed primarily of educated young gentlemen, it generally served as an independent

company, providing trained officers for the creation of other military commands in times

of war. It served variously as the 101st Engineer Battalion, the 211th Coast Artillery and

now as the 211th Military Police Battalion of the Army National Guard. The traditions of

the old corps are maintained by the “Veteran Association of the First Corps of Cadets”

which formed as a supporting agency in 1876 and maintains a substantial museum on

Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. Salem’s “Second Corps of Cadets” was formed in

1786 and, like the First Corps, was later subsumed into the National Guard sharing its

heritage with the currently 101st Field Artillery with an active “Second Corps Cadets

Veterans Association” that perpetuates it historical lineage.
The “First Muster” ceremony is conducted during the first weekend in April each year on the expansive Salem Common. It commemorates the birth of the Bay Colony militia and features a parade of numerous military historical units such as the re-created “Salem Trayned Band” bearing twelve foot pikes and firelocks and marching alongside infantry, artillery and engineer companies from the Army Guard’s 181st and 182nd Infantry Regiments, 101st Engineer Battalion and 101st Field Artillery. Additionally, units from the 182nd Infantry, the old “Middlesex Regiment,” regularly conduct a standard Army 12 mile road march along the route (now known as “Battle Road” in Minuteman National Park) at which their fore-bearers engaged the British regulars at the North Bridge in Concord Bridge, then at Merriams Corner and beyond.

Each year, hundreds to thousands of living historians (a number of whom are military Veterans) commemorate the “Lexington Alarm” and the first combat at Concord and the ensuing 16 mile back to Boston. Some are meticulously historically authentic to a fault in uniform or civilian attire and masters of the weapons and close order drill of the period while others assume a more laissez faire approach but contribute to the events all the same. Since 2014, hundreds of Veterans, military members and patriotic civilians take part in the “Tough Ruck” 26.2 mile march along the Battle Road every April in a Boston Marathon sanctioned alternate event to commemorate the actions of the Bay Colony militia and the birth of the nation.

Today’s armed forces are composed in part by large numbers of service members who are inspired with the faith themes of their historical traditions (Puritan and otherwise). As a liberal western democracy, American leadership has been traditionally cautious in regards to excessively employing religious sentiments to inspire the troops, but the Puritan past insists that the rigorous faith that is foundational to the American
experience must be given a measure of free expression in the public square including the
Armed Forces. Consequently, critical inspirational features vital to the military
experience such as the official Army song “The Army Goes Rolling Along” adopted in
1956, display notable expressions of faith: “First to fight, for the right and to build the
Nation’s might, And the Army goes rolling along . . . Faith in God, then we’re right, And
we’ll fight with all our might, As the Army keeps rolling along.”[^147] That the “American
Way of Life” is tangible factor in the US military construct is undeniable. The first article
of the “Code of Conduct for Members of the United States Armed Forces” established by
President Eisenhower in a 1955 executive order states that “I am an American, fighting in
the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in
their defense” and concludes several lines later with the declaration that “I will never
forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and
dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the
United States of America.”[^148]

While the military corps of chaplains represents the broad array of faith groups
present in today’s military, its foundations are particularly linked to the military ministers
of New England. Religion and religious services had often been utilized by the authorities
across the colonies to encourage morality and order. Attendance at Sabbath day worship
services was compulsory in all New England towns as well as in several colonies for
many years. Anglo military forces on both sides of the Atlantic practiced mandatory
attendance with British officers using the time following the closing prayer to read out
the articles of war including the dire punishments to be meted out for failure to comply.

[^148]: Executive Order 10631--Code of Conduct for members of the Armed Forces of
codification/executive-order/10631.html
The New England chaplaincy, drawing on the historical Puritan enthusiasm for preaching, was particularly known for its role in rousing the populace to actively support the American Revolution to the extent that British senior commanders were known to bitterly complain of the “Black Robe Regiment” that was indeed a force multiplier for the Patriot cause.

Chaplains of all faiths today continue to play a critical role in military commands, and are given highly visible roles in most official unit functions which still begin with an invocation and end with a benediction. More importantly, chaplains serve as haven of confidentiality and as moral guides who providing positive encouragement and wisdom to the commands they serve in addition to serving as a voice right behavior in accordance with American and individual faith values. As mentioned previously, Protestants continue to compose the largest faith group in the military of which Southern Baptists remain the largest cohort. Military chaplains are as much or more motivated about their mission and vision as ever and it is a mission that clearly resembles the Puritan way that animated it so long ago. Many serving officers and enlisted men return to the ranks as chaplains themselves after experiencing the “call” to serve in a different capacity. One example is Chaplain John McDougall, a West Point graduate and combat Veteran who has served in various elite Army command assignments including the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the 82nd Airborne Division and the 75th Ranger Regiment. In true Puritan-warrior form, McDougall likens the coming of Christ to the world as a raid into enemy held territory. In his book, Jesus Was an Airborne Ranger, McDougall seeks to depart from a popular and mild-mannered “boy-band” image of Christ that holds little appeal for warriors, proclaiming that: “Jesus was like elite divinely commissioned Soldier. He was on an
important mission. And he courageously squared off against the Enemy of our souls.”

Interestingly, McDougal takes his title from a well-known evangelical chorus popularized by Johnny Cash that proclaims that “I have a home in glory land that outshines the sun” and “I took Jesus as my Savior, You take him too.” True to form, Soldiers adapted the tune and used it as a marching cadence for many years singing out “Jesus was an Airborne Ranger, you’ll be one too!” and “Jesus led a twelve man fire team, you’ll lead one too!” Unlike the feeble “Father Mulcahy” image popularized by “MASH” most chaplains are far more driven, reflecting a sense of military professionalism, mission and pride of service. McDougall repeats themes that have been popular among Army chaplains for generations with a typical call for action to his fellow warriors in typical Ranger/Infantry operational terms: Don’t hide in a fortress. God has made you for so much more! He has called you to “close with and destroy” the evil that plagues you, your family, and the world. This is the mission you were made for!” and concluding with the Ranger motto: “Lock and load. It’s time to join the fight. Rangers Lead the Way!”

Puritan culture and practices are also persistent in the military justice system and the body of military law known as the “Uniform Code of Military Justice.” As previously noted, sociologist Ronald Lorenzo maintains, not always convincingly, that there are indeed extensive and excessive traces of the Puritan mentality in the modern military. To what extent this is true is debatable and it should be noted that while the military is distinctly conservative by nature, it does reflect the changing and developing mores of the society it serves. As a “public entity” it is subject to the politically inspired directives of

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150 McDougall, *Jesus Was an Airborne Ranger*, 197.
the commander-in-chief which often place it on the forward edge of social change in the
country. For example, previously banned as a prosecutable offense, homosexuality in the
armed forces is now deemed a private matter solely at the discretion of the individual
service member and same sex marriage is now a federally protected right. While topics
such as these pose a challenge for many military chaplains, the middle ground between
dogmatic faith and changing mores has thus far been generally successfully negotiated.
Meanwhile, conduct such as marital infidelity or even fraternization between enlisted and
officer ranks is still considered prejudicial to the good order and discipline of the service
(a common military justice concept) and is regularly prosecuted.

Militia and Regulars – The American/New England Way of War

When most Americans think of the country’s earliest war-fighting venture, they
default to an image of the New England militia (and the “Minute Man”) as the nation’s
first armed force. Thus, the militia is indelibly imprinted in the popular American mind as
the quintessential warrior. But, to implement the American way of war, legislators and
strategic leaders have established a federal force structure that is basically comprised of
Active Duty and Reserve services. All of the five services (in order of seniority - Army,
Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard) each have a federal reserve component
(eg US Army Reserve, US Air Force Reserve). However, only the Army and the Air
Force have an additional reserve component making them tri-component in nature.
These additional forces, the militias of each state, are the Army National Guard and the
Air National Guard. While sharing the same service model as their Reserve counterparts
(monthly training weekends and two-three week “annual training” events) they are dually
appointed having both a federal and state mission and serving at the behest of either the
president or the governor as “commander in chief” depending on the purposes for which they are called to duty (typically relief from natural disasters or security at the state level). Much of the combat power of the Army resides in state militia formations (National Guard), with the Army Reserve focusing on combat support services.

Throughout the nation’s history there has been an unbroken chain of military and political leaders who have advocated ceaselessly on behalf of the need for a strong militia while others have disparaged the performance of the militia and questioned the value of its continued existence. From the acerbic comments of British professionals in the colonial era to the qualms of American strategic theorists in the modern era, the shortcomings of the militia forces were not without fact. However, much of their criticism reflected a faulty understanding of the nature and value added benefits of the militia forces. With the establishment of the National Guard Bureau early in the twentieth century and increasing standardization across the states, militia units gradually became more militarily proficient while continuing to serve as a large scale relief force for their respective states in times of domestic emergency or natural catastrophe. Until the deployment of some militia units in the First Gulf War, the vast majority of militia commands had not seen service since World War Two. The ensuing peacekeeping deployments to Bosnia, Kosovo and the Sinai in the mid-1990s and finally the events of the Global War on Terror dramatically altered the debate, dispelling much of the previous criticism and reinforcing the intrinsic value of the Guard formations.

Despite these advances, the debate over the efficiency and validity of maintaining militia forces continues. While the reasons are many and varied, one of the most prominent and inviolable arguments for maintaining militia forces is the
strong connection if affords with the general American populace; essentially a matter of national accountability. The reasoning goes that as long as much of our combat power resides in the state forces who are partially under the control of local leaders (who have powers to resist the demands of the federal command structure), then there will always be a safeguard to the unwarranted or ill-advised use of American power. In other words, the close relation with the states allow them to place a physical check on the national powers abilities to wage war or deploy indiscriminately in the event of politically unpopular conflicts. It is no coincidence that of the 2.6 million US troops deployed over the course of 12 years to what would become a hotly contested involvement in Vietnam, only 9,000 of them were Army or Air National Guardsmen.\footnote{National Guard Bureau, Remembering the Vietnam War, Accessed from http://www.nationalguard.mil/Features/2016/Vietnam.aspx}

The concept of civil control of the armed forces and transparency relates directly to another central tenant of Puritan/New England Way, that of “accountability.” American forces have been and continue to remain subservient to the National Command Authority (NCA), composed of the President and his/her civilian advisors. That US military only wages war, in theory, at the direction of the Congress and thereby representing the whole of the American people, is a point of great pride among American traditionalists. Stringent oversight and accountability in terms of materiel, budget execution and personal actions of leaders at all levels is a standard practice with transparency a constant goal in the military. Military leaders know that their actions or lack thereof hold exceptional, potentially life or death, consequences for their troops. They also know they are responsible for influencing their soldiers to accomplish the
mission and creating an effective command climate, with the ever present maxim that they alone are ultimately responsible for all the command does or fails to do.

Part of the esteem across the world for the efficiency and appeal of the US armed forces (and the civil police), is due to their reputation for integrity and an over-all lack of corruption which is due in part to the fervent personal faith of numerous leaders and troops who believe they are called to a higher standard. While that reputation has suffered somewhat in the wake of such events as the invasion of Iraq, there is still a generally positive approbation for American military in many quarters. Accountability in the American military also means that the “I was just following orders” excuse is entirely unacceptable. A core tenant that all military members are learn in initial active duty training is that they are not obligated and should resist obeying an unlawful order. While executing that judgement may prove difficult when face with an ambiguous situation, the basic principle provides a moral guide in uncertainty. This extreme sense of accountability that the Puritans held dear is regularly practiced in the congregations of covenanting communities across the country who continue this tradition.

In reality, Puritanism in America is the larger theme that remains a significant (if not readily evident nor commonly referenced), element in our national conversation about our core identity, motives and framework of engagement with the international community. The desire for authenticity, genuine concern for the welfare of the other, and the sense of accountability to a divine power that guides the affairs of men remains at the heart of the American way for many dedicated Americans. As a national institution composed of volunteer professionals, the United States military establishment ideally reflects the values and purposes of the society from which it is drawn and zealously
guards its customs and traditional Americanism to a degree hardly known in any other part of American society. Overseen by the historical gatekeepers of its organizational leaders both in the military departments and the secretariats, in its traditions and mindset, it embodies the desire of the Puritan founders to be the “city on the hill”.

Today, the military members and civil servants of the American military continue to comprise the largest organization of all the US governmental agencies; the second largest agency being the Department of Veterans Affairs. Readily acknowledged, celebrate, maligned or disregarded, they have been and remain a cornerstone of the American national identity just as John Adams insisted. Together, the National Guard and Reserve components, combined with their active duty counterparts, comprise the total force missioned to execute American policy across the globe serving to a large degree as America’s ambassadors. While politicians, strategic theorists and policy wonks may hotly debate the essential nature of America’s military as a combat oriented power or a nation building force, a careful consideration of the intent of the nations’ founders would commend the concept of a warfighting fight force managed and applied as a means of implementing positive force in the world. The common sentiment among most American soldiers and leaders, reminiscent of their Puritan forbearers, is not that they are inherently superior individuals but that they are part of a superlative institution with an important mission to accomplish for the good of all freedom loving people. While sentimental in tone, it is nonetheless a critical strength factor when dealing with the often disturbing, grisly and gritty reality of warfare.

It is important to note that since the advent of the Global War on Terror, the National Guard has moved from a standby role as a “strategic reserve” to that of an
“operational reserve” who troops now expect to be called to active duty at some point in their careers (generally based on a five year window of readiness). The Puritan mindset continues to provide a framework of identity for the American warfighter, both Active and Reserve. In this total force effort, the need for effective, inspired and dedicated militia forces has never been greater. The deployment of militia/Guard units to a theater often brings a seasoned core of experienced veterans with it who provide a certain sense of continuity and stability to the command environment as well as discretion and maturity in their actions.

The success of the New England militia against the crack British professional army at Concord and Lexington was no accident. There were more seasoned combat veterans in the ranks of the American militia than in the regulars and their experience was telling on that day (over half of the Third Middlesex NCOs and officers had served in the French and Indian War).\textsuperscript{152} John Adams pays testimony to this unchanging requirement of the American/New England way of war in a later letter to a commander in the early American republic in which he states:

\begin{quote}
The American States have owed their existence to the militia for more than two hundred years. Neither schools nor town meetings have been more essential to the formation and character of the nation than the militia. * * * Whenever the militia comes to an end, or is despised or neglected, I shall consider the Union dissolved and the liberties of North America lost forever.\textsuperscript{153}
\end{quote}

The enduring positive concepts of the New England Puritans, lodged deep in the national psyche, yet compels most Americans (through times of skepticism, doubt, shame and

\textsuperscript{152} Gross, \textit{The Minutemen and Their World}, 70.

soul-searching), to see a larger purpose in the unique circumstances and development of the United States.

In the current era, America’s internal culture wars have resulted in a wave of populist governance characterized by a hyper-exaggerated “America first” mindset that has caused extensive divisions not only between right and left but within the ranks of conservatives themselves. Many of their philosophies are counter to the best traditions of American military leadership and diplomacy, threaten the security of the United States and diminish the positive perception of America in the world. The enthusiasm of sizable segments of the evangelical population for a celebrity driven national government, largely lacking in compassion or discernment, remains a matter of bafflement and concern for many conservatives. Perhaps the same sort of siege mentality that distorted the reasoning of formerly reliable leaders during the Salem witch hysteria of 1692 is again affecting the mentality of those who feel a sense of disequilibrium and threat to their core values. Veteran war correspondent, author and social observer, Sebastian Junger documents the devastating effects this internecine conflict holds for America’s returning service members. Having lived the powerful experience of a close association in a common cause with a higher purpose (the “tribe”) that evades so many in affluent modern societies, Veterans “often come home to find that, although they are willing to die for their country, they are not sure how to live for it.” This is particularly for a country with widening income disparity and lack of shared substantive values that “that regularly tears itself apart along every possible ethnic and demographic boundary.”

Like the Puritans who thrived in close knit communities with a sense of purpose, so do

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most people report being the happiest during times of trial and adversity when all are called on to act for the common good.

Regardless, many traditionalists believe that the historical perspective provided by the Puritan commitment to a virtuous common wealth society is foundational to the American identity and to proper governance. They insist that America is (or was) highly regarded in the world, not simply because of its superior military prowess or technical advancement but because of its compassion and commitment to the general well-being of all peoples in the framework of enlightened democracy. Likewise, military “gate keepers” such as Snider and Shine believe that the Army, with its high regard for meritocracy and value driven purpose, can serve as model of proper conduct for the nation in these times as it has in the past:

In such a noble institution, Soldiers work together, treat each other with dignity and respect, openly express their deeply held views, and, regardless of differences, evaluate each other’s performances based on the certifications and other standards of the profession . . . This is pluralism, multi-culturalism, and diversity rightly leveraged for military effectiveness! 155

Ultimately, America is by no means a predominately warrior culture although it has an intensely strong warrior tradition. America’s Army (and its military at large) are significantly influenced by its New England militia heritage and consequently has a unique sense of accountability to the American people than might otherwise be the case with a dominant superpower. While authoritarians and demagogues in other nations may find this sense of moral responsibility to be naïve and a liability, Americans hold it as a source of pride and an essential element of their national identity and strength.

Conclusion

In 1900, British minister and historian Walter Begley fostered the re-printing of one of only two known remaining copies of Cromwell’s “Souldier’s Catechism.” In his preface to the tract, Begley declares that:

It should never be forgotten, most of all in this material semi-pagan age in which we live, or to which we are apparently drifting, that Puritanism is a permanent element in human nature. One might even say, in spite of its frequent exaggerated forms, that it is one of the strongest, noblest and most valuable elements that help to build up the ordinary citizen. It is of this stuff that great and enduring nations are made. It is this sober, serious, honest, religious frame of mind that has so greatly helped to make both England and New England the great countries they now are. A sense of justice and right living combined with a serious view of life would form its chief characteristics. Privilege and tyranny are the object of its bitterest hate, more especially in things spiritual.  

In his commentary, Begley remarkably captures the essential sentiments of the enduring influence of the Puritan way (and the New England way) in the modern era. These are concepts to which Max Weber and other social theorists of the day identified as essential to the “American way” and made popular in their discourses. Many Puritan “descendants” in modern day America would readily identify with his assessment that we today in the Western world live in a materially focused world that is increasingly characterized by neo-paganism. Some maintain that this is nothing more than the natural state of things and is typical of a Western liberal democracy. America, however, continues an on-going struggle about its identities, core values and purposes; the New England way (found in both North and South) is still very much at the heart of the struggle. The Army and the American military as whole, traditionally the “face” of America, serve as a battleground itself as the country forges its future path.

\footnote{Cromwell, \textit{A Soldier’s Catechism}, viii.}
If we give credence to one of America’s premier colonial historians, David Hacket Fischer, those who hold an affinity for the efficacy of the New England way will gain some measure of confidence that the examples given the colonial/revolutionary generation (and their sense of a grand responsibility that goes with the preservation of liberty) are yet very much with us. Just as the folkways and material patterns of old England are still readily found in certain areas and American culture at large, we can also still clearly discern the practices of our forebears throughout our war fighting history. It is this powerful legacy that the US Army strategic planners referenced as essential block in the training of future American warrior-leaders. Despite the occasional moral failings and atrocities of some of its members and the nefarious purposes and self-centered short-sightedness of some who have employed it, American military power has been a liberating and positive force in support of the many nations who aspire to liberty under law. This is particularly so for those who served in its ranks since 1636, whatever their personal convictions or beliefs; those who believe it to be, not the machine of a world power, but a living entity to be employed for the good of all. Of their forebears filling the ranks of the New England militia, Fischer writes:

Once committed to what they regarded as a just and necessary war, these sons of Puritans hardened their hearts and became the most implacable of foes. Their many enemies who lived by a warrior-ethic always underestimated them, as a long parade of Indian braves, French aristocrats, British Regulars, Southern planters, German fascists, Japanese militarists, Marxist ideologues, and Arab adventurers [and radical Islamists] have invariably discovered to their heavy cost...they fought with courage and resolve – not for the sake of fighting, but for the sake of winning.157

While New England farmers of the time did not necessarily view professional war-fighting as a noble calling, they did choose to be always prepared for war because they felt it was a task with a transcendent purpose that must be accomplished for the good of the commonwealth when circumstances called for it. The US Army “Soldier’s Creed,” unapologetic in its devotion to the unique value of the “American way” typifies that traditional commitment:

I am an American Soldier. I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values . . . I am an expert and a professional. I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. I am a guardian of freedom and of the American way of life. I am an American Soldier.158

In the current era of global engagement and responsibility, the Puritan sense of mission and valuation of the role of the militia yet serve to instill a sense of the New England way in war fighting that has been inseparably blended in the fabric of the professional US military and serves to define the American way of war. The powerful legacies of the Bay Colony militia and of all America’s fighting forces, driven by the historical spirituality of the Puritan founders, do much to ensure that nation’s adversaries will indeed be overcome, defeated or “converted” by the strength of the best aspects of their history and the American way. As Begley so aptly noted, “It is of this [Puritan] stuff that great and enduring nations are made.”

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