The safest forecast one can make regarding the chaplaincy in the year 2000 AD is that it will have changed less than we expect. A Chaplain Van Winkle, vintage 1952, suddenly awakening in 1976, would require only a few days to adjust. Although he would be amazed at some of the things going on off-post, and at some aspects of the Army, he would find the continuity within the chaplaincy itself reassuring. He could fit comfortably into most elements of most chapel programs. Even the issues being discussed at weekly chaplain meetings would be remarkably similar to those of the early fifties when he fell asleep; he could enter some of the arguments with hardly a dropped analogy. We can confidently predict that today's chaplain would be equally at home in the chaplaincy 24 years in the future. This is not to deny the ubiquity of change in our society. The necessity of coping with constant and rapid change in the world of the late 20th century is too well known to be disputed. Yet armies and chaplaincies do remain relatively stable in such a changing environment. In basic ways, chaplain ministry is very much like it was a quarter-century ago, and the same is likely to be true a quarter-century in the future.

A second base line to be laid out as we prepare for a look at the chaplaincy in the year 2000 is a recognition that the most significant single source of change—the possibility of war—cannot be predicted. Armies exist to be prepared to wage war if necessary, and when that necessity arises, all bets are off. As World War II established the major parameters for today's armed forces, so another major worldwide conflict—a World War III—would bring forth a radically new situation, for the world and the nation as well as the armed forces. A localized war in the Near East or elsewhere would introduce significant new variables, as did the Korean and Vietnamese wars in the last quarter-century. Any rational futurologizing at this time must be based on an assumption that there will not be another global war, and on a recognition that future localized wars would significantly alter matters.

These two caveats aside, what changes can we expect the next quarter-century to bring to the military chaplaincy? A look at