From the perspective of military chaplains, the effect on the two major institutions they represent—the church and the armed forces—is of overwhelming importance. There is some evidence that both enjoy an improving public image. Of inestimable long-range significance, however, is one aspect of institutional demythologizing which is bringing about a major change in the basic way military service is defined and understood by the American people.

Historically, military service has not been regarded by Americans as a "job" comparable to any other kind of vocational activity. The dominant image out of the past was that of the citizen-soldier, volunteering or being involuntarily mobilized for national emergencies. The military environment embraced the whole of life and the Army was a "total institution." Since military service was civic obligation, pay was low. The obligation of a grateful nation to take care of its defenders, however, led to a large number of "benefits." The small nucleus of professionals, maintained between emergencies, was compensated for low pay and the hazardous nature of the calling by a wide range of fringe benefits, covering nearly every necessity of life—commissaries, post exchanges, complete medical care, recreational facilities, generous retirement provisions, even spiritual nurture from chaplains, all of which were in keeping with the "total institution" concept. In return for the shelter of this paternalistic umbrella, far more complete than the kind of protection accompanying any normal "job," the professional soldier was glad to forego the other side of the "job" equation: the personal rights of acceptance or rejection, a measure of control over work conditions, and the right to bargain over compensation.

The enormous post-World War II expansion of the size of permanent standing armed forces brought successive increases in military compensation to levels approaching comparability with civilian jobs. But there was no basic change in philosophy, since the system was buttressed by a draft, based on a theory that a period of national service was "owed" by all young men. Military service remained a special vocational category, distinct from ordinary jobs, with members foregoing personal control in exchange for a total life style and an umbrella of benefits.

The end of the draft, in response to public clamor during the highly unpopular Vietnamese War, coupled with the onset of the all-volunteer army, brought, however, a basic change in the rationale for military service. The absence of any statutory obligation, along with the absence of any feeling of personal obligation to sacrifice or to serve (which characterized the self-gratification ethic of the sixties and the early seventies) has left