

**THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY OF THE U.S. ARMY,
FOCUSING ON WORLD WAR II CHAPLAINS IN COMBAT.**

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I. INTRODUCTION AND THESIS.

Events and experience of World War II transformed the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps from an adjunct organization into a permanent organic component of the Army. This was largely the result of individual actions and initiatives, rather than through War Plans evolution. This paper will study the actions of four chaplains in combat, of different faiths and with different perspectives and responsibilities.

Chaplains, like other soldiers, are human. And the history of the World War II combat chaplains can only be told by speaking of such men:

Chaplain (Capt.) Albert J. Hoffman,
Battalion Chaplain, 3rd Battalion, 133rd Infantry, 34th Infantry Division

Chaplain (Capt.) Israel A.S. Yost,
Battalion Chaplain, 100th Infantry Battalion (Nisei)

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Wallace M. Hale,
Division Chaplain, 88th Infantry Division

Chaplain (Capt.) David Max Eichhorn,
Staff Chaplain, Headquarters, XV Corps

II. BACKGROUND: THE COMING OF WAR.

The Army's combat chaplaincy in World War I, led by Bishop Charles Brent, a special agent for the Young Men's Christian Association, was the responsibility of an administrative chaplains' office at the headquarters of Pershing's American Expeditionary Force. He was later to be commissioned in the Adjutant Generals' Department as "major and chaplain". It was only in 1920 that the Army appointed a Chief of Chaplains. ¹

In the early 1930s, when Douglas MacArthur was the Army Chief of Staff, the United States Army - sixteenth largest in the world - had but one mechanized regiment, led by cavalymen on horses which wore mustard-gas-proof boots. ²

¹. Roy J. Honeywell, *Chaplains of the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1958), 199.

². William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972* (Boston MA: Little, Brown, 1973), 1:5.

At about the same time, in the period of economic depression, there was a proposal by Army planners to reduce the officer corps by 2000 men, generally by mandating age-in-grade retirements. Given the college, seminary, and pastoral requirements for chaplains, they were at a disadvantage before they moved up the first rung of the promotion ladder. The list of chaplains to be removed named 80 out of 120, including the then-Chief of Chaplains and two future Chiefs of Chaplains. Fortunately for the future of the chaplaincy, and perhaps for the Army as a whole, "The plan was shelved; in large part because of developments in the Civilian Conservation Corps, and because [Army Chief of Staff Malin] Craig had misread the real feeling of the majority of churchmen who supported a ministry to the military."³

It was support of the CCC that took the Chaplain Corps in the other direction. Failures to commit to and act upon requirements by other departments of the government led to the Army's assumption "under the general supervision of the Director, [of] complete and permanent control of the CCC project." Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur was not happy, but it became the opportunity for reserve and guard soldiers and officers - including the chaplains - to gain experience. It also opened the way to recruit more reserve chaplains, and to 'harden' the corps. "By the mid-thirties 300 chaplains. Regular and Reserve, were on duty with the CCC."⁴

The Civilian Conservation Corps support - from 1933 into 1939 - and disaster relief activities were exactly the on-the-job experience needed for the coming 'ramp-up' to World War II. Wherever the Army responded, so did its chaplains.⁵

By the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, 140 chaplains of the Regular Army, 298 of the National Guard, and 1,040 Reserve chaplains were on duty. ... On the day hostilities closed, "V-J Day," the total was 8,141.⁶

III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A COMBAT CHAPLAIN.

Chaplains in combat during 1942 and 1943 created by their actions the 'roles of engagement' which were to be published as the 1944 edition of *The Chaplain*, TM 16-205.

A unit chaplain, whether or not in a combat unit, served as an immediate and confidential "member of the staff of his commanding officer, ... his logical consultant in matters involving public religious observances, morality, and character building."⁷

³. Robert L. Gushwa, *The United States Army Chaplaincy*, Vol. 4, *The Best and Worst of Times: 1920-1945* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977), 57-58.

⁴. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, 59-60.

⁵. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, 67-71.

⁶. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, 96, 9.

⁷. U.S. Army, *Technical Manual TM 16-205: The Chaplain*, 1944 edition (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 5 July 1944), 27.

The ministerial functions of a chaplain, in large measure, centered around the usual and special services of worship of his faith, providing or arranging for services for persons of other faiths, services for restricted groups - prisoners, hospitalized, in outposts and on the front lines - confessions, communion, other sacraments. There was in all of this little difference from the duties of a garrison chaplain, except that the quiet spot might be in the corner of a shelled building, and the altar found on the hood of a jeep. There was often the fruitful and welcome sharing of services and facilities with the clergy of a recently liberated town.⁸

The pastoral functions of a chaplain began by just listening with an attitude of friendliness, counseling, pulling in other resources such as Red Cross or Army Emergency Relief. At no time was a soldier more in need of friendly encouragement, a hot cup of coffee or chocolate bar (if medically prudent), discussion of anxieties or desires, than when he was sick or injured. A chaplain's support to the sick, wounded, dying - front line, battalion aid station, or after evacuation - was one of his most important functions. For those seriously wounded or near death, he did not impersonate the clergy of another faith, yet was able to give comfort in a spirit of kindness and faith so that the soldier might face surgery or death in confidence and peace. This support could and did extend to knowing the last rites, prayers, and blessing of the major faiths.⁹

Chaplains, by their professions of 'faith, hope, and charity' (and the *Geneva Conventions*), were also called upon to minister to enemy wounded and prisoners of war, and to render to the enemy dead the same care they gave to our own soldiers. Chaplain Hale (later) conveys exactly this sense of pastoral responsibility.

For chaplains in combat, the contacts with enemy prisoners or wounded were of shorter duration but more frequent than would normally be found in the rear echelons. The kindness of a chaplain's *Grüss Gott* (a Bavarian greeting) to a German prisoner shortly after capture might well lift some of the depression and pressures inherent in the prisoner's captivity.¹⁰

Looking more closely into the combat roles of chaplains, two extracts from *The Chaplain*, Technical Manual TM 16-205, the 1944 edition, follow. The first is the general description of the normally expected duties of a chaplain in combat:

When the ground forces go into action, their chaplain should be with them. This may mean he will move from one platoon to another or will minister to the wounded in exposed positions but never that he will place himself in unnecessary danger. He must be careful that his movements do not disclose hidden positions to the enemy nor draw his fire. If casualties are numerous, he will serve best at the forward aid station. He may be placed in charge of collecting the wounded and bringing them there or he may assist in bandaging and similar forms of relief in emergencies. His skills may save the lives of wounded men. While he will do everything in his power to relieve and increase the

⁸. U.S. Army, *The Chaplain*, 1944 ed., 34-45.

⁹. U.S. Army, *The Chaplain*, 1944 ed., 46-48.

¹⁰. U.S. Army, *The Chaplain*, 1944 ed., 48.

physical comfort of the men, he will bear in mind that this is not his primary function. He will do his utmost to comfort the suffering and give the consolations of religion to the dying. ... The chaplain who shares the peril of battle, showing kindness that never fails and a sincere concern for their welfare, will gain a place in their confidence that will reinforce powerfully all his efforts to give moral and religious instruction and inspiration. ¹¹

The second extract examines the line between permitted, indirect support of military action and proscribed, direct participation which could forfeit a chaplain's protected status under the Geneva Conventions:

Many proper services performed by the chaplains are an indirect injury to the enemy. If he raises the morale of the men, he makes them better fighters. If he bandages a wound, he may save the life of a soldier who will fight again at a later time. If he distributes chocolate bars in fox holes, he may make the soldiers more energetic physically and more resolute of mind. These, however, are proper functions, and he would do the same for enemy wounded or prisoners. If he were to observe the enemy position and tell the artillery where to fire, or were to carry ammunition to the firing line, or convey information or orders about combat operations, it would be direct participation in hostilities. ¹²

Nothing is found in the then-applicable 1933 *Geneva Convention on Amelioration* which bears on how one distinguishes chaplains or medical personnel causing 'direct' rather than 'indirect' injury to the enemy. The convention allows medical personnel to be "armed and use its arms in self-defense or in defense of its sick and wounded", but is vague in extending that right to chaplains. It is seemingly left to the enemy beholder to determine whether acts of noncombatants cause their protection to "cease if they are used to commit acts injurious to the enemy." ¹³

The duty of Graves Registration Officer remained a holdover assignment from World War I. ¹⁴ Its definition was carried forward into *The Chaplain* manual in 1941. ¹⁵ The 1944 edition of that manual backed off to discuss only in general the burial of the dead, marking of the graves,

¹¹. U.S. Army, *The Chaplain*, 1944 ed., 64.

¹². U.S. Army, *The Chaplain*, 1944 ed., 67.

¹³. Geneva Convention, "Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and the Sick of Armies in the Field," *The American Journal of International Law* 27, no. 2, Supplement: Official Documents (April, 1933): 49-50.

¹⁴. Honeywell, *Chaplains*, 191: Some [World War I] chaplains were made burial officers for entire divisions. This involved the organization and supervision of many activities if the dead of the battlefield were to be found and given proper burial ... Some chaplains were overwhelmed by the cumulative horror of these duties. On the verge of insanity, one babbled of the number he had buried and of increasing his record.

¹⁵. U.S. Army, *Technical Manual TM 16-205: The Chaplain*, 1941 edition (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 21 April 1941), 66-68.

and simple but dignified burial services, "because such consideration for the dead will have a wholesome effect upon their surviving comrades." ¹⁶

After the 1941 edition of *The Chaplain*, the next step was found in the 1943 annual report of the Chief of Chaplains, *The Chaplain Serves*. That report, in part a distillation of the monthly reports of all chaplains, wrote of what was actually being done by the chaplains in combat in 1942 and 1943. For example,

The chaplain assists the Medical Department personnel in finding and carrying the wounded to the rear. When death is imminent he renders such services or administers such rites as may be appropriate. He visits the hospitals in the rear as often as possible, writes letters for the men, and performs such other services as are necessary. Sometimes circumstances require the chaplain to bury the dead. This duty he performs in addition to the religious services, caring for the personal effects of the dead, marking the graves, and writing appropriate letters. ¹⁷

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: CHAPLAINS BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.

CHAPLAIN (CAPT.) ALBERT J. HOFFMAN, CATHOLIC, 1909-1983 3RD BATTALION, 133RD INFANTRY, 34TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Before World War II, the life of Father Albert Hoffman, an assistant pastor in Dubuque, Iowa, was, in the words of Jack Alexander, "strikingly like that of the young curate portrayed by Bing Crosby in the motion picture, *Going My Way*." ¹⁸ As a combat chaplain in North Africa and Italy, he would be better portrayed as Randolph Scott, the fearless lawman who cleaned up the lawless town.

The Lonely Soldier.

In Chaplain Hoffman's view, the loneliest soldier was the one who, having gone out ahead of the lines, got hit. His fellows didn't know where to find him, and he knew they didn't. Or, if they did know, there might be some reason why they were unable to go out and get him. The days were long and the nights were longer, and a man might die of loss of blood, waiting there. Those things happen often in war, particularly in a war where infantrymen camouflage themselves in such a way that a friend, as well as an enemy, might be deceived. And when a man is wounded, he seeks out a ditch, or a hedge, or anything else that would offer added concealment.

¹⁶. U.S. Army, *The Chaplain*, 1944 ed., 65.

¹⁷. U.S. Army, *The Chaplain Serves: A Narrative and Factual Report Covering the Activity of the Chaplain Corps, as Coordinated by the Chief of Chaplains, for the Calendar Year 1943* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1944), 52-53.

¹⁸. Jack Alexander, "He's Our Guy" [Chaplain Albert Hoffman], *Saturday Evening Post* 217 (April 28, 1945): 11.

It is a boost to an infantryman's morale to know, when he sets out on a dangerous mission, that there is someone in his outfit that is expert at what are known as "crawling-out" rescue jobs. In the 133d Regiment of the 34th Division, which is one of the most-mauled divisions of the AEF, the acknowledged expert was Chaplain Hoffman. The priest bird-dogged the wounded with the skill and persistence of a setter pointing and retrieving quail. Even the medics, who were old hands at bird-dogging, willingly deferred to him. They frequently found that Chaplain Hoffman had got there first. ¹⁹

Front Line Temperament, Finding a Niche.

Chaplains, on acceptance in the Army, were provided with four- to six-week's training in their duties, and of the Army ways, at the Chaplain School, most of them in classes of up to 450 during the period when it was hosted at Harvard University. For the chaplains already in the field, they still had the 1941 'book of rules' and its expectations; but their 'lessons learned' were by then beginning to adapt to a new war - no more trench warfare or cavalry charges.

Chaplain Hoffman saw his job differently, as have other chaplains of the same cast of mind. He justified his extra risks, in part, by reflecting that in learning the concealment tricks of the infantryman, he had minimized, as far as he could, the danger of being hit. Moreover, he held, the unaided wounded lying out in the field had the highest call on the chaplain's services. Then front-line troops would fight from greater moral motivation from knowing that their accredited representative of religion was with them personally. ²⁰

Hoffman, although a quiet nonbelligerent man, simply had a front-line temperament. And the front line troops throughout the regiment would tell one another, "He's our guy." They thought of him as a personal possession, the way they did a good combat officer. ²¹

Homer Ankrum, who knew Hoffman well, saw him as "very much a realist, practical thinking and though a very devout Christian man, he well understood the nature of man and the combat soldier." Hoffman's own words seem to confirm and offer an explanation of this analysis:

A soldier is close to death, and therefore close to reality. But some men just don't pray; it's not in their makeup. Some want to, but don't know how to, and an example is a sergeant who yelled over to me when we got pinned down by a German mortar platoon, "Al, you know how to pray. Get started!" ²²

¹⁹. Alexander, "He's Our Guy:" 10.

²⁰. Alexander, "He's Our Guy:" 10.

²¹. Alexander, "He's Our Guy:" 10.

²². Homer R. Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears In World War II: A Chronicle ...* [34th Infantry Division] (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishing, 1988), 345.

Evacuation of Wounded.

PFC George L. McAvoy, of Washington, Iowa, talked about Chaplain Hoffman:

We were advancing under heavy artillery fire when one of the shells exploded near me. I hit the dirt with both of my legs filled with shrapnel. Several hours later Father Hoffman came crawling up with two medics. We were still under fire, but they moved me out of danger. It took an hour and a half to get down to the little hut only 200 yards down the mountainside where the Aid Station had been set up. When I was taken care of, Chaplain Hoffman went out in search of the other wounded. Before the night was over, he had brought four more casualties to the station. One was a wounded German prisoner whose life was saved when the Italians were about to finish him. ²³

Indirect vs. Direct Support Of Combat Operations.

Chaplains, with their relative freedom to move about the battlefield, had to be constantly conscious whether their support was rendered to the soldier as a human being or as a combatant. There was a fuzzy border between indirect (permitted) and direct (prohibited) support of combat operations.

Chaplain Hoffman seems to have crossed that border. The first situation below is probably arguable - he was doing the job of a combat engineer, not an infantryman. The second situation, however, would appear to be clearly denied for a chaplain. Carrying ammunition as opposed to, for example, carrying rations was a quite different levels of legitimately 'lending a hand'.

As German mines became more and more of a menace, he learned from sappers the delicate business of defusing. After that, when a platoon he was traveling with came to a mine field, he insisted on going into it first. ... ²⁴

Ammunition bearers darted and dashed across the terrain all afternoon ... Chaplain Hoffman, as he often did when he was going that direction, could be seen carrying up ammunition for the mortar platoon. ²⁵

Santa Maria Olivetto.

Throughout the three-day battle for Santa Maria Olivetto, November 4-6, 1943, Hoffman continued to lead medics, helping to give first aid, last rites to the dying, and comfort to the wounded. While attempting to give aid to a wounded German soldier in a minefield Hoffman himself stepped on a mine, lost his leg, and almost his life. He ordered medics not to come to his own aid, but - disobeying - one was killed, another seriously wounded. He started to say his last prayers and lost consciousness.

²³. Christopher Cross, *Soldiers of God*, in collaboration with Maj. Gen. William R. Arnold (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1945), 139.

²⁴. Alexander, "He's Our Guy:" 10.

²⁵. Ankrum, *Dogfaces*, 288.

Word their beloved Chaplain was perhaps mortally wounded passed through the [133rd] Regiment like wildfire. Mine sweepers hastened to the area where they worked feverishly to clear the mine fields for a path to his side. Placing Hoffman on a stretcher, tears welled in the eyes of the battle-hardened men bearing him, as well as those along the route to the aid station. ²⁶

After Combat: Then What?

Concurrent with his own recovery, and until his discharge at war's end from the army, Father Hoffman became chaplain to the thousands of amputees at Percy Jones General Hospital, Battle Creek, Michigan. For his actions at Santa Maria Olivetto, Chaplain (Capt.) Albert Hoffman was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, unusual for a chaplain, because it recognizes "extraordinary heroism while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States."

Henry Sheffield, one of Father Hoffman's post-war parishioners, recently wrote:

The interesting thing about Father Hoffman is that he never told any of us about his war-time experiences. He never told of his decorations or wore them at local military functions. I'm sure he took pride in his service, but people were always the most important to him, not 'gee-gaws'. Looking back to his last illness with the medical knowledge we now have, it is quite apparent that this good man suffered from 'flash-backs' and post-traumatic stress syndrome. How badly we will never know, but he had the will-power to go about his priestly functions without fail and ministered well to his large flock. ... When I first started researching his heroics in Italy, I knew that the privilege we enjoyed was ever so much greater than we could have imagined. ²⁷

This same private courage and reticence was common to many of the soldiers who were our most severely battered and bruised veterans.

CHAPLAIN (CAPT.) ISRAEL A.S. YOST, 1916-2000 100TH INFANTRY BATTALION (NISEI)

Establishing a Routine.

Chaplains, more than others, had some discretion in where and how to allocate their time and labors. In order to properly manage themselves, chaplains generally established a routine. Chaplain Yost

... had established a definite pattern of life during combat: assist the medics in the battalion aid station as long as enough litter bearers were available to bring in the wounded; go forward as a litter bearer whenever needed; in lulls between skirmishes, circulate among the men in their dug-in positions, whenever this was possible without

²⁶. Ankrum, *Dogfaces*, 344.

²⁷. Henry Sheffield, e-mail message to author, November 11, 2006.

my movements drawing fire from the enemy; direct the evacuation of our own KIAs [soldiers Killed In Action] and, when possible, supervise the burial on the spot of the German dead; counsel with any GIs who were disturbed, usually at the battalion aid [station]; set an example of cheerfulness and of faith in all my contacts with the men and the officers. I always carried my Bible in my musette pack, a small Lutheran *Common Service Book* in a hip pocket, and stationery and envelopes in my map case. Almost every day I read a chapter of the Bible and wrote a letter to my wife. As a litter bearer I normally replaced two of the Nisei because I was so much bigger than most of them; downhill I placed the front handles on my shoulders and two of the AJAs [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] carried the rear.²⁸

Battalion Aid Stations were often suggested as a 'home base' for chaplains when casualties were expected. For some situations and terrains, further back at Battalion Headquarters might have been more effective. For Chaplain Yost, the Battalion Aid Station was his natural center of action, while for Chaplain Hoffman, it sometimes seemed as though he saw that as being a 'rear area'. Each chaplain was different, each situation was different.

Front Line Burnout.

Four months into his assignment with the 100th Battalion, Chaplain Yost learned from his friend and Nisei mentor, Dr. Katsumi Kometani, how the battalion - and certainly other effective units - were able to handle 'battle rattle'. This next incident took place during the assaults on Monte Cassino:

Kome and I and a medic returning from a rest camp walked together toward the forward area to go to the forward aid [station] there. When we came to a section of the trail under observation of the enemy, we decided to cross the open spot individually so that we would attract less attention and not be fired at. I went first, got to the rendezvous, and waited for Kome; after an interval of time he arrived. Then the two of us sat in a sheltered place and waited for the enlisted man to join us. After some time I became alarmed because the medic did not catch up with us. Kome suggested that we wait a bit longer before checking to see if he might have been injured - we could not see far down the trail. After quite some time, Kome said, "I don't think he's coming, Chaplain. I thought when we started out he looked scared. I'm not surprised that he hasn't come."

"But that's bad for him," I replied. "He can be court-martialed for not obeying orders, for not coming back into combat."

"No, Chaplain, that's won't happen. When we get to the aid station I'll phone back to the rear and have them reassign him to some duty back there. He's been in combat too long as a company aid man. He just can't take it any longer."

²⁸. Israel A.S. Yost, *Combat Chaplain: The Personal Story of the WWII Chaplain of the Japanese American 100th Battalion*, edited by Monica E. Yost and Michael Markrich (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 27.

And that's just the way the matter was handled. No one was the wiser except the three of us involved. The soldier had already given all he could for the war effort; he no longer had the spirit to keep pushing himself. Those of us who were healthy and with high morale were able to carry on in his stead, just as he would have done for one of us had the circumstances been reversed.²⁹

Chaplain Hale spoke also to this problem in his memoir; he effectively used short notes to unit commanders suggesting 'a change of scenery' for an overwrought soldier. There was, for every front line soldier, a point of burnout; it was sometimes overcome with a break.³⁰

Chaplains Under Arms.

Chaplain Yost, while in Southern France, December 1944 - January 1945, found himself placed by commanders in a situation which he felt risked his status as a non-combatant under the *Geneva Convention*. Yost complied with the order, but in a way that, for him, avoided the issue:

During this time all forces opposing German troops in Europe were alerted to the possibility of advances in their areas; on our border with Italy [still German-occupied] we were warned of the possibility of paratroopers dropping behind our lines. Should this occur such Nazis would want to acquire American uniforms to pass themselves off within France as Americans. We chaplains were therefore ordered to carry arms during this period whenever we were away from close contact with our own troops. I complied. On jeep trips away from Menton, Kent [his assistant]³¹ carried a rifle in its case on his side of the vehicle and I placed a loaded pistol beside my car seat. It was clear to me that we were armed for the protection of our uniforms and not of our persons. It was only during this short time span that I was ever "armed" while overseas.³²

In hindsight, the Geneva Convention of that period allowed medical personnel and, by extension, chaplains to be "armed and use its arms in self-defense or in defense of its sick and wounded".³³

²⁹. Yost, *Combat Chaplain*, 122-123.

³⁰. Rev. Wallace M. Hale, *Battle Rattle* (Allen TX: Timberwolf Press, 2004), 135-137.

³¹. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, 176: The Chaplain's assistant was not the chaplain's orderly nor the assistant chaplain. His duties were to drive and maintain a jeep and trailer; typing, play the organ and lead a choir; carry a weapon to protect himself and his chaplain; set up the altar for Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish services; maintain records and prepare reports.

³². Yost, *Combat Chaplain*, 214-215.

³³. Geneva Convention, "Convention for the Amelioration:" 49.

Diversity of Faiths.

All chaplains were familiar with the appropriate last blessings, prayers, and rites of the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths, and could invoke them - in at least a lay capacity - when necessary. But even beyond that the military chaplaincy was a truly ecumenical experience. Witness this baptism by Chaplain Yost, after a morning service at A Company, 100th Infantry Battalion,

... one of the worshipers asked me to explain the difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants. At 4:30 p.m., seven of the company came to the battalion aid [station] to request baptism. After I had explained the meaning of the sacrament, one who had been raised Buddhist questioned his right to change religions. He seemed satisfied when I explained what Christians mean by "free will." All promised to receive instruction. Using water in a canteen cup, I baptized all seven in the same manner I had baptized the four on November 14. In the blacked-out church, the light of a single candle added an impressiveness to the ceremony. We were in the midst of the paraphernalia of the medics: litters, blankets, opened chests with jars and bandages on the top of trays. Captain Kometani and Isaac Akinaka stood as official witness that these seven AJAs were now Christians. ...

This was a unique event: it took place in an Italian Roman Catholic church converted for the time into an American aid station; the pastor was a German American and the new believers were Japanese Americans, one of the witnesses, Sergeant Akinaka, was a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormon); the other witness, Doc Kometani, told the converts that this was the most important decision they had ever made. ³⁴

Chaplain Yost, in these baptisms, omitted from his liturgical "Order for the Baptism for Adults" the pledge of loyalty to the Lutheran Church. Instead Yost "asked each one of them to think about what church in the [Hawaiian] Islands he would like to join and urged each to write to that congregation requesting membership." ³⁵

CHAPLAIN (LT. COL.) WALLACE M. HALE, SOUTHERN BAPTIST, 1914-2007 DIVISION CHAPLAIN, 88TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Wallace Hale differed from the other chaplains profiled here, in that he was commissioned in the Regular Army in 1939 and remained in the Army until 1967, ending that career as Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. Chaplains Eichhorn, Hoffman, and Yost enlisted or were activated 'for the duration of the war plus six months.'

³⁴. Yost, *Combat Chaplain*, 67-68.

³⁵. Yost, *Combat Chaplain*, 63.

Combat Workbook.

In appreciating the duties of a chaplain in combat, we recognize that a strong emphasis is placed on the immediate - time and locale - maintenance of records. Such source documents are the foundation of future historic studies. The most important of these for the military chaplain, lest detail be too soon forgotten, is the record of deaths and burials. Chaplain (Col. Ret.) Parker Thompson, a colleague of Wallace Hale, spoke of this at Chaplain Hale's Memorial Service:

... many years later, Wallace gave me his combat workbook. He gave it to me to present into the Army Chaplains Museum. I hand-carried it to see that it was done correctly. It's one of the gems in our little military history, for Wallace listed the name, rank, serial number, unit, denomination, location of burial of well over a thousand of his soldiers. Wherever they were buried, where they fell, he was there to give them Christian burial, to locate their graves so that Graves Registration could later come by and remove them for burial in appropriate places. So far, I haven't said anything interesting. But if you took that manual, you would find page after page after page of German soldiers: their names, their ranks, their units, their location of burial, because Wallace buried them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Wallace knew no enemy. Wallace saw people as either the sons and daughters of the Living God through Jesus Christ, or he saw them as potential sons and daughters of the Living God. No enemy. They were treated as lovingly, as tenderly, as each and every American soldier. A fighter: yes. A Christian gentleman: yes. ³⁶

Morgan Line: The Early 'Iron Curtain' Border.

Chaplain Hale remained in Italy with the 88th Infantry Division - an occupation force along a hostile border - until 1947. There was no longer 'hunkering down' in foxholes under artillery fires, but there were constant patrols and outpost duty from south of Trieste for sixty miles up to Austria. Hale and the 88th were combat-ready, on alert, and occasionally under fire until late-1947. The Yugoslavs were nominally Allies, but this was also the period when Yugoslavia was militarily and diplomatically attempting to move the southern end of the Iron Curtain westward, so as to control the entire Venezia Giulia Province.

Typical of the tension of those times, on the 11th of August, 1946, "an American Red Cross jeep was fired on in daylight. On the 22nd the Division Mobile Library truck, on its way to bring a little relaxation to a Morgan Line outpost, was fired upon on the main highway north of Gorizia. The driver, PFC Wade Tarnglee, realizing that his top-heavy vehicle was not built for a race, quickly dismounted and returned the fire with his semi-automatic carbine." ³⁷

³⁶. Rev. Parker Thompson, *Wallace Hale Eulogy*, March 11, 2007. Transcribed from Charles Eppert 3d, *The Reverend Wallace Hale, Memorial Service* (private edition CD), time 58:13 - 60:22.

³⁷. John P. Delaney, *The Blue Devils in Italy: A History of the 88th Infantry Division in World War II* (Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1988), 269.

Entering Yugoslavia.

Brief truces were not unknown in war to allow recovery and exchanges of wounded and deceased soldiers, but for Chaplain Hale August 1946 took that to a new level, that of ceremony between adversaries across the early Iron Curtain border: generals, ambassadors, salutes, and a message from a head of state. Hale, then a Lt. Col., was in command of the party that retrieved the bodies of these fallen airmen into American hands.

AIDUSSINA, Italy, Aug. 28 [1946] (AP) - The flag-draped coffins of the five United States fliers shot down in Yugoslavia were delivered today by motor convoy, and then by stretcher bearers marching across the Morgan Line, to United States authorities for the long journey home. United States Ambassador Richard C. Patterson, who accompanied the bodies from Ljubljana, told newsmen that "Marshal Tito assured me personally and officially that there will not be any repetition of this event." He declared, however, that despite the Yugoslav Premier's explanations, "there can be no adequate satisfaction for the death of five Americans." The men were killed when their C-47 [DC-3] transport was shot down in flames by Yugoslav fighters on Aug. 19. It was 2:30 P.M. when the motor convoy bearing the fliers' remains pulled up to the Morgan Line - the boundary separating the Yugoslav-occupied and United States-British-occupied areas of disputed Venezia Giulia Province. Maj. Gen. Bryant E. Moore, commander of the United States Eighty-Eighth Infantry Division met the cortege, [following a brief exchange of regrets and assurances] Yugoslav officers and a small group of Yugoslav soldiers snapped to attention. And then the five coffins, draped with United States flags and covered with flowers, were transferred from a Yugoslav ambulance and carried by United States stretcher-bearers across the hundred yards separating the Yugoslav and United States Morgan Line outposts. The five coffins were placed in five ambulances. As the ambulances moved off toward Udine, Italy, under a military police escort, two platoons of the Eighty-Eighth Division presented arms.³⁸

Two explanations of Chaplain Wallace Hale's entry into Yugoslav-controlled territory have been offered; both are credible. The first, that the recovery party, led by the Division Chaplain, and accompanied by Maj. Mark Aisner,³⁹ commanding the 319th Station Hospital, was seemingly; the 'ceremony' of the occasion was thus divorced from the combat arms. The second was that the chaplain and doctor were among the few senior officers able to enter Yugoslav territory without arms or under the protection of arms. For some time after that the daily Allied courier flights from Udine, Italy to Vienna, Austria were flown using B-17s rather than C-47s.

³⁸. Associated Press, "U.S. Army Receives Bodies of 5 Fliers," *New York Times*, Aug 29, 1946, 6. <http://select.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F20C1FF7395C107A93CBAB1783D85F428485F9> .

³⁹. Fred Lincoln, personal communication, May 5, 2007. Independent confirmation of the doctor's identity is being sought.

German Chaplains.

At the end of World War II in Europe, Chaplain Hale's 88th Infantry Division "was assigned to guard, control, and administer some 300,000 PWs [Prisoners of War] in concentration areas stretching from Naples to the Brenner Pass."⁴⁰ A special POW Command section was set up under Assistant Division Commander Brig. Gen. James Fry to manage their repatriation or detention, and to provide work units under American or British command for reconstruction projects in the entire Mediterranean Theater. The largest of the concentration stockades at was the Ghedi airport near Milano, where 70,000 members of the German 14th Army were assigned, two to a pup-text, privates up through colonels.

Undertaking to destroy the so-called "Nazi Religion," a by-product of National Socialism, Chaplain Wallace M. Hale set about to bring a rebirth of Christian religion to the German prisoners under 88th control. Chaplain Hale organized and directed his assistant chaplains, representing several faiths, in screening former German chaplains and ministers from the ranks of the PWs. Religious essentials of equipment were borrowed or improvised and when the screening was completed, a Chaplain Corps was set up and functioning in the remnants of the German Army for the first time since 1942 when the Nazis virtually had abolished the office.⁴¹

Chaplain Hale was given permission to go to the World Council of Churches in Switzerland and to the Holy See at the Vatican State to arrange for supplies, books, equipment, vestments for the prisoner-chaplains. With that aid, the road to a religious rebirth was paved. In conversations with the author, Hale spoke of having found among the prisoners fifteen young Catholic priests who, upon completion of their seminary training, were drafted into the Wehrmacht Sanitary Corps as privates, forbidden to practice their holy calling. The recounting of his trip to the Vatican, which included a private meeting with Pope Pius XII, where he received all the hoped-for support, always ended with a chuckle as he said, "That's not too bad for a good ol' Southern Baptist boy." He also smiled when he would tell of appointing those newly minted chaplains as Brevet Captains in the German Army.⁴²

"Battle Rattle".

Battle Rattle, chosen as the title for Hale's memoir, was the "soldier's term which best described the mental trauma engendered in the human brain by persistent and extended hand-to-hand combat. Often the soldier suffered 'battle rattle' when he realized he was one of the few men left standing - and somewhere close by there was a deadly bullet with his name on it."⁴³ It differs

⁴⁰. Delaney, *Blue Devils in Italy*, 234.

⁴¹. Delaney, *Blue Devils in Italy*, 237-238.

⁴². Wallace M. Hale, personal communications, 2000-2006.

⁴³. Hale, *Battle Rattle*, 3.

from the emotion portrayed in the World War II painting *Two-Thousand-Yard Stare* by Tom Lea.
⁴⁴ The former is about to break; the latter is on a 'hair-trigger'.

Who Was This Man?

Trying to find concise characterizations for these chaplains in combat is extremely difficult. Not least of the difficulties is that a military chaplain serves different roles in different situations, to self, soldier, commander, church. At the recent memorial service for Wallace Hale, his friend and colleague, Chaplain (Col. Ret.) Parker Thompson asked and then suggested answers for, "Who was this man, Wallace Hale?" Thompson's remarks do not directly address the evolution of the U.S. Army chaplaincy in World War II. But they are offered as an appendix to this paper because they speak to the character of a breed of chaplains and soldiers that have passed on.

CHAPLAIN (CAPT.) DAVID MAX EICHHORN, 1906-1986

STAFF CHAPLAIN, HEADQUARTERS, XV CORPS

Luneville.

There were combat chaplains who put themselves in harm's way: Father Albert Hoffman, attempting to rescue the wounded German soldier in the minefield, and then cautioning fellow soldier not to risk themselves to help retrieve him was one. There were others who found themselves in harm's way: Rabbi David Max Eichhorn conducted *Yom Kippur* services on September 26th, 1944 in the synagogue of Luneville where they learned only afterward that the town was on the contested front line and had not yet been 'liberated'.

... on foot, by jeep and by truck, 350 battle-grimed [American] Jewish soldiers came to the synagogue for *Kol Nidre*. In they came, their faces coated with dirt - grim, brave, fighting sons of Judah ... for the first time since I had been in France I broke down and cried. No matter what I had seen before of the wounded, the dying and the dead, I had managed to steel myself against tears, but this was too much. The noises of war raged around us as together we intoned our traditional prayers. The men kept on their full battle-dress and their guns were at the ready. Together we prayed that mankind might be spared another such *Yom Kippur*.⁴⁵

Eichhorn returned the following day, when it was officially on the American side of the front line, and conducted two more services for four hundred soldiers.

Rosieres-aux-Salines.

Perhaps the greatest pressure on chaplains in combat occurred in Northern Europe for the Jewish chaplains who every day saw the desperation of the Jewish refugees who came out of hiding, synagogues and torahs destroyed, the simple joy of these people who once again heard a

⁴⁴. Jack Jones, *WW II*, graphics direction Art Weithas (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1975), 113,116.

⁴⁵. David Max Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi: World War II Letters Of David Max Eichhorn*. Edited by Greg Palmer and Mark S. Zaid (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 109.

greeting or blessing in Hebrew or Yiddish, and who, after years of denial, were able to share in a Shabbat service. Those chaplains had not only their duties and responsibilities within the military units, but also a pastoral obligation to assist Judaic communities along the way.

Finding the unusual activities of chaplains in combat is never dull. The following entry was found in a daily log kept by Rabbi Eichhorn: "Wed 11/1: Furnished relief to 20 old Jewish ladies at Rosieres-aux-Salines." ⁴⁶ It, in turn, pointed to this report:

I have been doing quite a bit of work among refugees. In one town (Rosieres-aux-Salines), I located 22 old Jewish women, ranging in age from 68 to 97, whose husbands and children have been deported and who had been left behind by the Germans deliberately as a burden upon the community. The 97-year-old lady, a staunch Orthodox Jewess, has died and I conducted her funeral. I have been taking care of the rest with the aid of money raised by Jewish soldiers and supplies furnished by the American Army and the French. I found these helpless beings existing in two rooms in a city hospital, dirty, lousy, and half-starved. They had to stay in bed most of the time because they had few clothes and no means of heating their rooms. The sight and smell required quite a bit of stamina to endure. The Army has given them food, wood for their stoves, woolen underwear, shoes, and heavy coats. The soldiers in the past two weeks have given me over \$800 to help these and other Jewish refugees who needed help God bless the American Army and the American Jewish soldiers. There is no other Army like it in the whole world. I had to plead with these men not to give me as much as they wanted to give. Many of them wanted to empty their pockets and give me all they had. I am trying to get the old ladies placed in an Old Folks Home (Jewish) at Nancy. ⁴⁷

Chaplain Eichhorn, working out of a Corps Headquarters in the rear, was not always able to return nightly to his bed, but that allowed him more occasions to be involved with refugees than Hoffman or Yost. And it would seem the case that among the refugee populations, the Jews were in greatest need of assistance. But there still remained the military side of his duties. In order to appreciate the mix between and pressure of his refugee and military duties, the next three entries of his Daily Log follow (the 2nd French Armored Division was under XV Corps command at the time):

Thurs 11/2: Funeral service, Roland Zebib, North African Jew, 20 years old, 16th Co, 13th Bn of Engineers, 2nd French Armored Division, buried in civilian cemetery near Chatel, 75 people present. 6 hospital visits, 51st Evac Hosp.

Fri 11/3: 2 interviews with Civil Affairs officers on refugees and repair of synagogue. 1 conference with chaplain. 2 conferences with EM. 2 letters to relatives. Service, 108th AAA Bn, 25 present.

⁴⁶. Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi*, 231.

⁴⁷. Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi*, 130.

Sat 11/4: Service, 315th Inf, Bayon, 9 a.m., 70 present (Next week will be Sunday at 1:30 p.m.). 6 hospital visits, 11th Evac Hosp. Said funeral prayers for Leon Elboz, 3rd RMT, 2nd Fr Armored Div, 20 years old, wounded at [unreadable] and died this day at 11th Evac Hosp, was native of Morocco. Service, 79th Div Arty, Blainville, 26 present. Visited Civil Affairs Officers at St Nicholas and Dombasle in interest of refugees. Conference with Ch Emmanuel Schenk of 4th Armored Div. 3 letters to families. ⁴⁸

Sometimes there were easy days too. The 10/7/44 and 12/5/44 log entries were "Spent in office."

Nürnberg

There were the truly joyful days:

On Sunday afternoon, April 22 [1945], the little jeep with the big Magen David [Rabbi Eichhorn's jeep had the Judaic six-pointed star in place of the normal U.S. five-pointed star on the hood] entered Zeppelin Stadium, the huge arena in the suburbs of Nuremberg where the Nazi Party Congresses were held and the place where, some ten evil years ago, 250,000 cheering Nazis approved the enactment of those discriminatory laws which resulted in the destruction of nearly five million of our brethren. In the jeep were one American Jewish Chaplain, one American Jewish chaplain's assistant, one portable *Aron Ha-Kodesh*, one Torah (property of the destroyed Jewish community of Hagenau, Alsace, France), and five Palestinian Jewish soldiers who had been captives of the Nazis for four long years. Behind followed a second jeep bearing five American Jewish soldiers of the 45th Infantry Division, fighting soldiers who had helped destroy the citadel of Nuremberg.

Slowly and proudly, the little procession drove around the stadium. It halted before the speakers' rostrum, a rostrum surmounted by a resplendent gold-leafed swastika, the rostrum from which *der Fuehrer* had, again and again, fulminated against democracy and the Jews. The soldiers got out of the jeeps and, forming a guard of honor around the holy Ark, carried it up the steps to the speakers' platform. Here the procession halted. The Ark was opened and the Torah taken out. The representative of an eternal people offered up songs and prayers of thanksgiving to the eternal God for having once more revealed to mankind the certainty of His justice and the timeliness of His love. At the end of the service the Americans and the Palestinians joined hands and, forming a solid ring around the rabbi, the Ark, and the Torah, pledged fidelity to the cause of Israel and the worship of Israel's God.

Shortly thereafter, units of the 3rd Infantry Division, which, together with the 45th, took the city, assembled in the stadium. They listened to words of congratulation and praise from Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, commanding general of the Seventh Army. Then demolition charges were attached to the resplendent gold-leafed

⁴⁸. Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi*, 231.

swastika atop the speakers' platform, and it was blown sky-high. Amid the thousands of cheering beholders, none, perhaps were more deeply moved than the little group of seven Americans and the five soldiers from Palestine who were clustered around the little jeep with the big Magen David.⁴⁹

Dachau

And there were the days of misery discovered. Chaplain Eichhorn was at Dachau for a week after it was liberated, until his Corps moved from Munich to Salzburg. Bonnie Gurewitsch noted in a 2006 Remembrance that "Eichhorn understood immediately that although their physical needs were being addressed, the Jewish survivors of Dachau had another, pressing need: they needed to say *Kaddish*. They needed to mourn their losses as Jews, so that they could begin to live again, as Jews."⁵⁰

Chaplain Eichhorn, who was able to provide the first Jewish services in Dachau's Allach subcamp, wrote, without detail:

The horrors of [Dachau] have been described by so many others and in such detail that I shall not dwell upon them. ... We cried. But our tears were not merely tears of sorrow. They were tears of hate. Combat hardened soldiers, Gentile and Jew, black and white, cried tears of hate⁵¹

It was not only the Jews who felt hatred. The Catholics had discovered their share of misery:

Soon stories about the fate of the Catholic clergy in the camp began to emerge, horrifying Catholics around the globe. Dachau's priests (most of them Polish) had been forced to endure every possible trial that their captors could invent ... Catholic chaplains who interviewed the priests who had survived became bitter and determined to see that the perpetrators of such deeds receive justice.⁵²

Nor was it just the chaplains and combat soldiers who felt this. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a 1945 letter to General George C. Marshall, wrote:

The most interesting - although horrible - sight that I encountered during the trip [to forward areas of the U.S. First and Third Armies] was a visit to the German internment camp [Ohrdruf-Nord] near Gotha. The things that I saw beggar description ... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and

⁴⁹. Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi*, 173-174.

⁵⁰. Bonnie Gurewitsch, *Honoring Jewish WWII Veterans* (Melrose Park PA: Gratz College, 2006). <http://www.gratz.edu/page4723.aspx> .

⁵¹. Chaplain Louis Barish, editor, *Rabbis in Uniform: A Century of Service to God and Country (1862-1962): The Story of the American Jewish Military Chaplain* (New York: Jonathan David, 1962), 64.

⁵². Donald F. Crosby, S.J., *Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 173.

bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things if ever, in the future there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to "propaganda".⁵³

V. EVALUATION: THE CHANGES WROUGHT.

A strong Army Chief of Chaplains, Brig. Gen. (later Maj. Gen.) William R. Arnold finally had rank (1941), authority, and - most importantly - support from the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. George C. Marshall. With the help of many, he was able to create, organize, and administer a religious program for the World War II American Army. Sitting as Chief over 9,000 chaplains - rather than the pre-war 125 - made an obvious difference simply in terms of visibility. The chaplaincy now gained also tremendous support from the churches and synagogues of America. They were aware that their future was closely tied to what happened to America's millions of young men in the service.⁵⁴

The autonomous Corps, no longer a dependency of the Adjutant General, was now better prepared to work with the ecclesiastic bodies. There was a rational division of responsibility - not in the sense of check and balance, but rather which was better suited for each role. The Army set the general qualifications; the church confirmed the religious qualification, the Army then selected for best fit within its near-term needs, and provided the indoctrination in the Chaplain School at Harvard University.

Outside perception of the professional nature of the Chaplain Corps was reflected in the accorded respect and credibility. Liaisons became commonplace between the chaplaincies of other services and nations, and with the religious bodies, even unto the World Council of Churches in Geneva and the Holy See at the Vatican City.

The American and Allied sense and hope for a better future included a perhaps unexpected benefit as chaplains returned after the war to their churches, schools, and communities. The nature of their service in combat stripped away many of the traditional icons and trappings; the faith of many chaplains was deepened by this return to the basics. There was also a significant growth in ecumenical spirit and understanding. At the battalion aid stations and the burial sites, the chaplains, regardless of their own faith, knew and used appropriately the counsel, prayers and last rites befitting the soldier who was sick, wounded, dying, or just plain afraid and exhausted.

Perhaps the most valuable and lasting support provided by the military chaplain was his efforts at both front line and the rear area to relieve the misery and to return a feeling of respect to the oppressed peoples with whom they came into contact. This was most evident (and

⁵³. Alan M. Dershowitz, "Minimizing the Holocaust", *American Legion Magazine* 162, no. 5 (May 2007): 36.

⁵⁴. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, 189.

traumatic) among the Jewish chaplains in northern Europe, but the deeds and simple presence of humanitarian support were evident in every theater

The question now is: did the actions of men such as Chaplains Hoffman, Yost, Hale, and Eichhorn have a permanent impact on the military chaplaincy of the United States Army?

For that we seek assessments from inside and outside the the Corps, enlisted men and officers of the Army, veterans, national leaders, and churchmen. These assessments apply to both the Chaplain Corps and the contributions of men such as our representative combat chaplains.

In 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt set the goal: "And we will never fail to provide for the spiritual need of our officers and men under the chaplains of our armed services." ⁵⁵

Was that expectation realized?

When Dwight D. Eisenhower served as President he said, with a great deal of military experience on which to base it, "... the consecration, the diligence, the courage and the resourcefulness of its chaplains is part of the Army's proudest traditions." ⁵⁶

Carl Snyder, a former NCO who knew Father Hoffman at both Santa Maria Olivetto and at postwar division reunions, spoke often of this chaplain. He said it simply, as did many of his fellow-soldiers: "I had a great deal of respect for Father Hoffman. He gave a great deal of confidence and inspiration." ⁵⁷

Speaking for veterans at large, Martin Blumenson, a respected military historian, wrote,

In the postwar years, when combat veterans have met to commemorate their wartime exertions, they have venerated their chaplains. They regard the padres - the priests, ministers, and rabbis who shared their perils - with equal amounts of awe and affection. For the chaplains traveled over battlefields under fire and through the flaming interiors of stricken battleships to look for and rescue those in danger. This was their duty, and they were concerned, genuinely and sincerely, for the safety of their charges.

⁵⁸

Two field commanders assessed the impact of their combat chaplains at that time. Lt. Col. Farrant Turner, the first commander of the 100th Infantry Battalion (Nisei), when leaving that command, wrote to Chaplain Yost:

You have done things which no chaplain could be required to do. You have repeatedly assisted in the actual care of the wounded and have assisted in their

⁵⁵. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, 189.

⁵⁶. Gushwa, *The Best and Worst of Times*, viii.

⁵⁷. Carl "Dutch" Snyder, personal communication, March 15, 2007.

⁵⁸. Crosby, *Battlefield Chaplains*, xii.

evacuation under heavy shell-fire. Your skill and the comfort you have given painfully wounded men have aided materially in their recovery. I can truthfully say that no man in the unit is more respected or loved than you are. ⁵⁹

At the end of the War in Europe, Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., commanding in Italy successively the 3rd Infantry Division, VI Corps, and Fifth Army, gave the combat chaplains his highest praise. Three of them: Hale, Hoffman, and Yost served in Fifth Army units:

While all Chaplains of our Army serve in an indispensable capacity, it is the combat chaplain who in particular renders a work that holds him up as an individual to be admired. And in a singular way, the Fifth Army Chaplains are combat Chaplains. Their outstanding efforts to bring the benefits of religion to the front lines as well as to the rear areas, their ministrations to the wounded and dying, and above all their personal conduct as men of God, living with the Fifth Army men as one of them, courageous and inspirational, through all the manifest hardships of the campaign, effectively contributed to the high morale prevalent among the units. To have served with them is an honor and a privilege and evokes praise of a job well done. ⁶⁰

The father of a soldier speaks next: a letter certainly treasured by Rabbi Eichhorn was the response to a long letter of condolence he had written to the father of a rifle company commander in the 79th Division. The young officer was observing artillery fire on his second day after returning to the line from recuperation leave; he was one of many wounded soldiers that Eichhorn had earlier visited in a Normandy evacuation hospital. The father's letter read,

You have written me a perfectly beautiful and thoughtful letter which I greatly appreciate. This message from you will be a great comfort and satisfaction to my son's wife and his mother and sister. ...

The son and father were Capt. Alex Patch Jr. and Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, commanding Seventh Army. The general's letter concluded, "Noting your address, I know that I shall soon be able to thank you personally." And he did - one of their meetings was at Zeppelin Stadium in Nürnberg. ⁶¹

There is almost a sense of ritual in this next assessment, but the position of all the major churches was substantially the same. Pope Pius XII, as an archbishop, had served as papal nuncio to Bavaria and the remainder of the German Empire in the latter years of World War I, and thus knew well of war in both Italy and Germany. Many of the Catholic Chaplains serving with the Fifth Army had the opportunity of group or private audiences with the Pontiff in the weeks after Rome was liberated.

⁵⁹. Yost, *Combat Chaplain*, 65.

⁶⁰. [Dean T. Stephenson], *American Chaplains of the Fifth Army* (Milan, IT: Pizzi & Pizzio, 1945), 5.

⁶¹. Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi*, 116-118.

One morning, he met a young Benedictine priest and said to him, "You must be very happy to represent the Benedictine Order on the front lines." When the man began to weep: the pope replied, "I know that many of your young men are no longer living, and that is why you are crying, but you ... are doing more for your Order than you could ever do in a lifetime in the monastery." The pope then took the man's hands and silently, gravely, made the sign of the cross on the back of each one. With a single powerful gesture, he had demonstrated his solidarity with his brother-priests around the world who had answered the call to military service. ⁶²

And lastly, Chaplain Hale responds for the chaplains to all of these assessments:

I stand in awe and wonder as I have seen what the American soldier has done for he always seemed to be on the offensive - and was always in a very vulnerable position. We always let the other guys start the war and we begin our fight at a serious disadvantage - but because of the quality of the American soldier, and material, "we go on and win." ⁶³

VI. CONCLUSION.

World War II provided an unprecedented opportunity for the American military chaplaincy, accomplished in a period of death and destruction. 'Clergymen in uniforms' were to become and remain an acknowledged corps of professional soldiers, as well as an appreciated and supported segment of their religious establishments.

That transformation did not come about as the result of a staff study or similar exercise, but rather evolved in a 'crucible of fire' by unusual men in unusual and unexpected actions.

To the combat veterans, their combat chaplains rank up there with Bill Mauldin and Ernie Pyle as 'Our Guys'.

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References to allied work added to Bibliography December 17, 2008

⁶². Crosby, *Battlefield Chaplains*, 119-120.

⁶³. Hale, *Battle Rattle*. 97.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

This project is dedicated to Reverend Wallace M. Hale, Ph.D. (Oxford), Col. USA (Ret.), 1914-2007.

He was a family and personal friend, the last of the World War II combat soldiers I remember from Italy. I was honored to first know him while there during the early Cold War standoff days.

For their support and guidance, I thank Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria II, who honored me by being my advisor; Dr. Richard J. Sommers, who over the years has encouraged my quests into World War II history; and Genevieve Kazdin, reader, companion, lover of books, and constant source of encouragement.

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APPENDIX. "WHO WAS THIS MAN?"

This past March 11th, at the Memorial Service for Chaplain Wallace Hale, his friend and colleague, Chaplain Parker Thompson (Col. Ret.) offered these thoughts.

So who was this big, genial, devout, scholarly man of action? Who was this man? This one who could talk with Oxford Dons, enjoy the company and be enjoyed by leaders of both State and Church, and yet could pastor a tiny little church in Loudon County and be as happy as if he were in heaven itself. Who was this man who could walk with Cardinals and even the Pope, with generals and diplomats, and yet felt as much at home in Arby's drinking coffee, swapping war stories with old veterans? Who was this Wallace? In a retrospective of his life, in the years that I've known him and know of him, I would offer two suggestions.

First, Wallace was a product of his own time and environment, each of which are now gone. Wallace was not a throw-back. We look on him oftentimes as a bit of a character, but he was a product of the post-Civil War South. Stop and think: the Civil War was much closer to the time of his boyhood than World War II is to us now. His father came from Mississippi, devastated by the war. He was surrounded by men who had served four long years, and lost, and lost everything. The Indian Wars had hardly been over. What you and I think of in the movies was the reality of his boyhood, the frontiersmen. They didn't wear sandals in Texas. They didn't wear earrings. A boy was expected to be a man; a man was expected to be a man. If it was broke, they'd fix it; if they needed it, they built it. He was to fight to defend what was his own, and yet there was a genteel humor. The people of that period loved oratory. Scholars have told us - and this may seem a little improper in a Baptist Church - that said if you checked the old saddlebags of those Kentuckians of that period, you would be sure to find three things: one, a pistol; two, a bottle of whiskey; three, a copy of Milton. They were frontiersmen, but they loved the beauty of the language. They may not have been long on formal education, but they loved scholarship. Having said that, Wallace was maybe the last of the frontier sort that many of our young people today will see. He was not a throwback; he was a product of his age. Those of you who remember your Latin, '*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*': that was the high compliment given a man: 'Gentle in manners, mighty in deeds'. Wallace did not betray his heritage.

But there's another dimension to Wallace Hale. The raw material that was born and shaped in the poverty's frontier was refined and polished. His sainted mother, the mother of eight children, could not often go to church. But she read him the Bible. ...⁶⁴

⁶⁴. Thompson, *Wallace Hale Eulogy*, time 48:21-53:08.

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