

## **A Historiography for: The Military Chaplaincy, 1937-1950, with Focus on Chaplains in Combat <sup>1</sup>**

### **The Official Histories**

The several official histories are both anecdotal - about individual chaplains and their environment, their tales of valor and deeds of mercy - and organizational - relations with the ecclesiastical bodies from which the chaplains have been drawn, the mission and operations of the Corps of Chaplains as a division of the Army itself, and to some extent interactions which involve the church-state separation issue and the military-community accommodation in both war and peace.

*Chaplains of the United States Army*. (1958, 376+ pp.) <sup>2</sup>

*The United States Army Chaplaincy*, vols. 4 and 5. (1977, 438+ pp.) <sup>3</sup>

At first glance, finding those two titles next to each other, one might expect that Chaplain Roy Honeywell's *Chaplains of the U.S. Army* is an anecdotal history, while the multiply authored *U.S. Army Chaplaincy* is more likely to be an organizational history. When one focuses on the publication dates and their page counts, it becomes more reasonable to think of *Chaplains of the U.S. Army* as a prequel to the *U.S. Army Chaplaincy* series. The number of pages devoted to the period from 1920 until the Korean War were 150 and 300 respectively. The question is then more properly whether *Chaplains* is a subset of the later series or a generally independent study.

A close comparative reading in the history for the decade of the 1930s - 10 pages in *Chaplains* <sup>4</sup> and 36 pages in volume 4 (1920-1945) of *Army Chaplaincy* by Chaplain Robert Gushwa <sup>5</sup> - shows only about a half page of material carried forward from the earlier work.

The sources in *Chaplains* are largely from the reports of the Chief of Chaplains to the Adjutant General and in *The Army Chaplain*, the journal of the Army Chaplains Association, which was founded in 1925.

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<sup>1</sup>. This historiography was originally prepared in February 2007, updated in March 2008. Sources principally applicable beyond 1950 are here severely curtailed

<sup>2</sup>. Roy J. Honeywell, *Chaplains of the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1958). This covers the period from biblical times to 1954.

<sup>3</sup>. Office of the Chief of Chaplains, *The United States Army Chaplaincy*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977-1997). The two volumes germane to this historiography are:

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);

Rodger R. Venzke, *The United States Army Chaplaincy*, vol. 5, *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace 1945-1975* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977).

<sup>4</sup>. Honeywell, *Chaplains*, 202-203, 206-213.

<sup>5</sup>. Gushwa, *Best and Worst of Times*, 49-84.

Books are said to be known by the company they keep; among the works frequently cited in volumes 4 and 5 of *Army Chaplaincy* were: Burton Andrus, *I Was the Nuremberg Jailer*, 1969; Louis Barish, *Rabbis in Uniform*, 1962; G.M. Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary*, 1947; Shinsho Hanayama, *The Way of Deliverance*, 1950 (the Japanese war crimes trials); Ray Honeywell, *Chaplains of the United States Army*, 1958; Daniel Jorgensen, *The Service of Chaplains to Army Air Units 1917-1946*, 1961 and *Air Force Chaplains 1947-1960*, 1961(?); William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream*, 1973; and Maurice Matloff, *American Military History*, 1969. That is an impressive collection. Another significant resource was the collection of questionnaire responses, 1972-1974, from former chaplains which is in the archives of the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School, now at Fort Jackson SC.

Volume 4 of *Army Chaplaincy*, Gushwa's *The Best and Worst of Times 1920-1945*, opens upon a small Corps of Chaplains, 125 Regular Army chaplains authorized, which had managed to avert a two-thirds cut in their numbers. During the depression, primarily by fielding Reserve chaplains, 300 each year, the Corps of Chaplains had taken on the responsibility for ministering to the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. "The CCC was not designed to save the chaplaincy, but it certainly helped. ... The Army regarded the CCC as a diversion from its primary mission of winning the country's wars." <sup>6</sup> But - an important 'but' - the CCC chaplains provided the Corps of Chaplains with a personnel base to build upon when the nation started to mobilize in 1940. That base allowed the creation of a ministry of some 9,000 pastors, priests, and rabbis serving the U.S. Army - and its Army Air Force - during World War II. Behind those chaplains in combat, who are the focus here, there were other chaplains who had roles in direct support of them: replacement center chaplains, transport chaplains, railway chaplains, and - vitally important - the hospital chaplains.

Volume 5 of *Army Chaplaincy*, Ventzke's *Confidence in Battle, Inspiration in Peace 1945-1975*, covers a wide range of rapid and important changes in the mission of chaplains: occupation forces in Germany and Japan, offering ministerial support at war crimes trials, the growth of a standing army with its community of families to be served, the creation of a separate Veteran's Administration chaplaincy while Omar Bradley was head of the VA, and the spin-off of an Air Force chaplaincy. Also in this volume were the traumas of the wars in Korea and Vietnam, which are beyond our present scope.

Those two works, the single volume *Chaplains of the United State Army* in 1958 and the six volumes of *The United States Army Chaplaincy* starting in 1977, are found to be independent studies, either of which give a balanced portrayal of the Corps of Chaplains for the periods they cover. Taken together they simply add depth to the portrayals of each other.

These are the primal sources. *Army Chaplaincy* and *Chaplains* provide a broad foundation upon which many specialized studies might be developed, yet general enough to see chaplains in the overall contest of the World War II period. These sources detail the breaking away from America's prewar isolationism, building of an organization to turn civilian clergy into chaplains by the thousands, the blurring of denominational lines in the offering of support and comfort to all soldiers, and finally the transition after World War II to a standing army engaged in occupation duties and the rebuilding of nations.

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<sup>6</sup> Gushwa, *Best and Worst of Times*, 58-59.

*American Chaplains of the Fifth Army.* (1945, 86 pp.) <sup>7</sup>

Conditions after the Italian campaigns at the end of the war were such that the Allied forces were not under the same pressure as those in Germany and approaching Japan. Although originally an enemy in 1941, Italy became a co-belligerent on our side after the 1943 landings at Messina, Taranto, and Salerno. And so there was a time in the summer of 1945 when divisions, corps, and army remained organizationally intact but with 'stand-fast' missions that allowed them an opportunity to reflect and document their histories. *American Chaplains of the Fifth Army*, published during that period, identified all the chaplains who had served there from 1943, and the units to which they were assigned. These 80+ pages are valuable for describing the duties of over 400 combat and war-zone hospital chaplains. It was also an important source for volume 4 of the *Army Chaplaincy*.

**Memoirs and Anecdotal Histories**

The diversity of chaplains in combat precludes any attempt to point to a real or even suggested 'typical' or 'average' chaplain. Four chaplains have been chosen in this study to represent the spectrum: two battalion chaplains, for a while in the same regiment, but with little else in common; a division chaplain, Regular Army, as much a combat chaplain as the others; and a corps staff chaplain who, with no regular unit responsibility went wherever there was a need. They were a Catholic priest, Lutheran and Southern Baptist pastors, and a Jewish rabbi. They shared in common that they returned home to a good life. Being a noncombatant was not without its risks: chaplains had the third highest likelihood of being killed in combat, behind infantry and airmen. <sup>8</sup>

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

*Battle Rattle*, <sup>9</sup> the memoir of Chaplain Wallace Hale, follows the U.S. 88th Infantry Division, all draftees except for a cadre upon its July 1942 activation at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, and then on to the end of the Italian campaigns at the Brenner Pass in May 1945. This source traces several soldiers and officers over extended periods, from foxholes to division headquarters. It is not comprehensive, but therein lies its merit: it focuses on the human side of a combat chaplain who served with his division for five years, 1942-1947.

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<sup>7</sup>. [Dean T. Stephenson], *American Chaplains of the Fifth Army* (Milan IT: Pizzi & Pizzio, 1945).

<sup>8</sup>. Gushwa, *Best and Worst of Times*, 141.

<sup>9</sup>. Rev. Wallace M. Hale, *Battle Rattle* (Allen, TX: Timberwolf Press, 2004 [ISBN 1-58752-251-9]).

*The Blue Devils in Italy*,<sup>10</sup> a more formal and comprehensive history of the 88th Infantry Division, is the principal source documenting activities of the post-combat Prisoner of War Command in the Mediterranean Theater and of the division's later service, 1945-1947, as the American Occupation Force in Italy. Chaplain Hale played a significant role in both operations.

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

As worthy and important as are the duties of a combat chaplain in support of the troops, the greatest respect and praise probably should be accorded to the Jewish chaplains in the European Theater. It was they who most immediately and poignantly met with the distress of the Jewish peoples who were in hiding or imprisoned. The following is taken from the dust jacket flap of *The GI's Rabbi*,<sup>11</sup> David Max Eichhorn's memoir.

He was the soldier in the jeep with the big Star of David, driving from foxhole to foxhole, sometimes under fire, bringing faith and friendship to fighting men. David Max Eichhorn, a Jewish chaplain in the U. S. Army's XV Corps, saw action across France and into Germany until V-E Day and beyond. He was there at the Battle of the Bulge [and] participated in the liberation of Dachau. ... Because he was just one generation removed from being German himself, [his letters home and his reports] also show how he came to terms with his own loyalties and hatreds while witnessing Nazi atrocities against European Jews.

*Rabbis in Uniform*,<sup>12</sup> the definitive roster of Jewish chaplains in the American Armed Forces from 1862 to 1962, fits well here because a significant part of this work come from the pen of Chaplain Eichhorn. It is rather brief on narrative history until the beginning of World War II, but is then extensive by virtue of many individual reports and recollections, 280+ pages. The rosters are detailed: names, services, wars and dates, theaters and countries, awards and casualties. For example, Rabbi David Goldberg is reported as the first Jewish chaplain to serve in the U.S. Navy: initially with the Atlantic Fleet in 1917, and then remaining on duty until 1941.

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<sup>10</sup>. John P. Delaney, *The Blue Devils in Italy: A History of the 88th Infantry Division in World War II* (Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1988 [ISBN 0-89839-107-5]). My father, Lt.Col. Walter J. Skelly, is credited with creating the draft of the section on postwar occupation duties in Venezia-Giulia, Trieste, and along the Italo-Yugoslav border.

<sup>11</sup>. David Max Eichhorn, *The GI's Rabbi: World War II Letters Of David Max Eichhorn*, ed. Greg Palmer and Mark S. Zaid (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004 [ISBN 0-7006-1356-0]).

<sup>12</sup>. Chaplain Louis Barish, ed., *Rabbis in Uniform: The Story of the American Jewish Military Chaplain*. (New York: Jonathan David, 1962).

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

Chaplain Hoffman served with the National Guard "Red Bull" division, primarily drawn from Iowa and Minnesota, from its activation in early 1941 until he lost a leg in a minefield near Santa Maria Olivetto in November 1943, trying to aid a wounded German soldier.

There was a reported autobiography by Chaplain (Capt.) Albert Hoffman, but no available copy had initially been identified. Sufficient secondary material was on hand to continue with the Capstone project as proposed.<sup>13</sup> There are two principal sources.

Jack Alexander's "He's Our Guy",<sup>14</sup> a 1945 *Saturday Evening Post* feature article, is best suited for understanding his background and experiences which - in hindsight - make clear his value for supporting and counseling combat troops.

Homer Ankrum's *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears ...*,<sup>15</sup> the definitive but unofficial history of the 34th Infantry Division in, and preceding, World War II, is the better focus for appreciating individual acts of Hoffman's ministry in Northern Ireland, North Africa, and Italy to all faiths, foe as well as friend.

Donald Crosby's *Battlefield Chaplains*<sup>16</sup> takes only the information on Chaplain Hoffman's minefield incident from "He's Our Guy", but is elsewhere helpful in appreciating the contributions of the Catholic priests serving in their church's Military Ordinariate.

### **Chaplain (Capt.) Israel Yost, 100th Infantry Battalion (Nisei)**

A young Lutheran pastor, Israel Yost, a prewar pacifist, having watched so many of those whom he knew joining the Armed Services after Pearl Harbor, he felt compelled to follow them, not only as a chaplain, but seeking to minister to those most deeply involved. He asked to serve as the chaplain of an infantry battalion in combat. He got his wish: the 100th Infantry Battalion (Nisei) assigned to the 34th Infantry Division, soon to be known as "The Purple Heart Battalion", and later with the "Go For Broke" 442nd Regimental Combat Team (Nisei).

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<sup>13</sup>. Post-project research at the museum of the U.S. Army Chaplain School and Center, Fort Jackson, SC, did turn up a fairly extensive postwar questionnaire completed by Father Hoffman; this may well have been the basis for the autobiography mention.

<sup>14</sup>. Jack Alexander, "He's Our Guy" [Chaplain Albert Hoffman], *Saturday Evening Post* 217 (Apr. 28, 1945): 9-11,53,56,58.

<sup>15</sup>. Homer R. Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears In World War II: A Chronicle ...* [34th Infantry Division]. (Lake Mills IA: Graphic Publishing, 1988 [ISBN 0-89279-081-4]).

<sup>16</sup>. Donald F. Crosby, S.J. *Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996 [ISBN 0-7006-0814-1]). Crosby errs in stating one doctor was killed and another wounded in attempting to remove the wounded Hoffman from a minefield; the two men were stretcher-bearers, not doctors.

Yost's memoir, *Combat Chaplain*,<sup>17</sup> recounts that journey through World War II: Italy, Southern France, back to Italy, September 1943 to September 1945. It is fascinating history, powerful, well told. But the understanding of the man, his uncommon service to men, is perhaps best found in an Appendix, "Step Off the Road and Let the Dead Pass By" which was his address at the 100th Battalion Fifth Memorial Service, Honolulu, 1947.

Just one week after this 'Chaplains in Combat' project was completed, presented, and accepted at Norwich University yet another book was found, with another work by Israel Yost: "The Making of the 100th" in *Japanese Eyes ... American Heart*.<sup>18</sup> Again, it was an address at a 100th Battalion Memorial Service, this time the Fiftieth Anniversary, Honolulu, 1992. By speaking of their history, ambitions, challenges, he again shows the inner man who if anything, now comes through as more powerful, more perceptive.

**A recognition of other chaplains who were studied, but not selected for the final project:**

American Jewish Historical Society. "Rabbi [Roland B.] Gittelsohn's Iwo Jima Sermon." *Chapters in American Jewish History*, chap. 86. Also available online at <http://www.ajhs.org/publications/chapters/chapter.cfm?documentID=276> .

Brownville, C. Gordon. *With Christ in a Shell Hole*. Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1943.

The sermons of a World War I chaplain who was later affiliated with the World War II Army Chaplain School at Harvard University.

Hourihan, William J. "U.S. Army Chaplain Ministry to German War Criminals at Nuremberg, 1945-1946". Appendix in Cadenhead, Capt. Julia T, CHC USN. *Captivity: The Extreme Circumstance*. Pensacola FL: US Navy NETPDTC, 2001, Also available online at [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/navy/nrtc/14316\\_ind.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/navy/nrtc/14316_ind.pdf)

The activities of Chaplains Henry F. Gerecke and Sixtus R. O'Connor.

Rose, Ben L. *Memories of a Chaplain in Combat in World War II*. Richmond VA: QP Press, 2002.

Chaplain Rose served with the 113th Mechanized Cavalry Group in World War II Europe.

Willard, Chaplain W. Wyeth, Cmndr. (USNR). *The Leathernecks Come Through*. Forestdale, MA: New England Classics, 1985.

Chaplain Willard supported the Marine Corps in the World War II Pacific campaigns.

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<sup>17</sup>. Israel A.S. Yost, *Combat Chaplain: The Personal Story of the WWII Chaplain of the Japanese American 100th Battalion*, ed. Monica E. Yost & Michael Markrich (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006 [ISBN 0-8248-3082-2]).

<sup>18</sup>. Chaplain Israel Yost, "The Making of the 100th," in *Japanese Eyes ... American Heart: Personal Reflections of Hawaii's World War II Nisei Soldiers*, Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board (Honolulu, HI: Tendai Educational Foundation, 1998 [ISBN 0-8248-2162-9]), 265-272. I wish to express my appreciation to the members, officers, and staff of the 100th Infantry Battalion Veterans Club, Honolulu for showing me this and other much-appreciated resources.

## Other Documents of Interest and Value

### Duties of Chaplains in Combat

Crawford, Rev. Capt. Harry. "A Chaplain's Long Walk." *The United Church Observer* [Canada], new series, 70, no. 4 (Nov. 2006): 10.

Serving with Canadian Forces, Afghanistan in 2006, Rev. Crawford confirms in this short article that the role of a chaplain remains essentially the same as in World War II:

"[The soldiers] are tough and strangely sensitive, good-humoured yet often complaining, and they have no real idea of how brave they are. God has blessed me by placing me among them, and only asks that I give them a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear and from time to time, an inspired kick in the ass."

U.S. Army. *Technical Circular No. 4: The Regimental or Unit Chaplain*. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Mar. 1, 1942.

This early document provided advice for chaplains generally, but not for chaplains in combat; to a large degree this was World War I revisited.

U.S. Army. *Technical Manual TM 16-205: The Chaplain*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, July 1944.

A later document than TC4, here combat chaplains' duties are described, generally on the basis of what chaplains in the field in 1943 had documented as the procedures they followed.

### Organization of the Corps of Chaplains

Office of the Chief of Chaplains. *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.

Weddle, Chaplain (LTC) Donna C. *"The Lord's Will Be Done": A Study of Organization in the U.S. Army Chaplaincy During the Civil War*. Strategy Research Project. Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Apr. 7, 1999. Also available online at <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA363553>.

A useful reference for understanding the growth and evolution of the military chaplaincy.

### Operations of the Corps of Chaplains

Caldwell, Norman W. "Welfare Organization in the Luftwaffe," *Social Forces* 25, no. 1 (Oct., 1946): 53-60.

This paper contains a passing comment to the effect that chaplains were not assigned to German units created late in the war; other readings indicated the date as 1943.

Spellman, Archbishop Francis J. *No Greater Love: The Story of Our Soldiers*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945.

During World War II Spellman was Vicar - the ecclesiastical head - of the Catholic Church's Military Ordinariate of the United States; this book reports on his 1944 battlefield tour of the Mediterranean and European Theaters.

### **Consideration of Religious, Moral, and Ethical Principles**

Burchard, Waldo W. "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains," *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 5 (Oct., 1954): 528-535. Also available online at JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/> .

Howard, Michael, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman, eds. *The Laws of War: Constraints of Warfare in the Western World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994 [ISBN 0-300-05899-3].

Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. New York: Basic Books, 1977 [ISBN: 0-465-03705-4].