

UP FROM HANDYMEN:



THE UNITED STATES
ARMY CHAPLAINCY

1865-1920

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By

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FOREWORD

This volume is one of a series of five prepared by various authors, designed to be useful and instructive regarding the long history of the United States Army Chaplaincy. The emphasis throughout is on how Chaplains did their ministry in the contexts of both war and peace. The series seeks to present as full and as balanced an account as limitations of space and research time permit. The bibliography in each volume offers opportunities for further research leading to detailed studies, articles, monographs, and perhaps even volumes regarding persons, developments, and events of the periods concerned. No attempt has been made to express any specific point of view or to make policy recommendations. The contents of each volume represent the work of the individual author and do not represent the official view of the United States Government.

An effort has been made to make this volume as complete and factual as possible. In the light of new information and developments, there may be modifications required concerning the material, interpretations, and conclusions presented. Such corrections, additions, and suggestions as readers may have are welcome for use in future revisions; they should be addressed to:

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Chaplain Earl F. Stover, a Regular Army chaplain of the United Methodist Church, is the writer of this volume. Chaplain Stover is a native of Illinois and was pastor of a civilian congregation in Alton, Illinois, before his entry on active duty in 1957. He has served at Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Scott Air Force Base, Illinois; Fort Bliss, Texas; US Army Chaplain Center and School, Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, New York; and overseas, in Germany and Vietnam. He has been awarded the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

PREFACE

After the completion of the demobilization and reorganization of the Army following the Civil War, the chaplaincy consisted of a few the Adjutant General of the Army. With a few notable exceptions, they received their assignments from and submitted their monthly reports to the Adjutant General of the Army. With a few notable exceptions, they were merely tolerated. Their commanders burdened them with a variety of additional duties unrelated to their vocation. Writing about the chaplains of the 1886-1917 period, General John J. Pershing said that they were regarded as handymen. By 1920, however, most chaplains received respect, and the War Department encouraged commanders by regulations to let the chaplains be chaplains. The chaplaincy became a professional branch within the Army and was headed by a chaplain whose title was "Chief of Chaplains."

The purpose of my study is to ascertain if the evolution of the chaplaincy into a professional branch of the Army was the result of happenstance or effective ministry. To that end I focus upon the ministry of the chaplains. I have attempted to present objective and readable answers to the questions: What did the chaplains do and say? How was their ministry received?

Sometime after I began my research, it became obvious to me that certain people and organizations did for the chaplaincy and the spiritual care of the Army community what the chaplains, for various reasons, were unable to do. Thus I wrote about the ministries of Dr. Charles F. E. Minnigerode to Jefferson Davis at Fort Monroe; of missionaries and other clergymen in the West; of organizations such as the American Bible Society and the Young Men's Christian Association; and of religious groups such as the Protestant-oriented Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Roman Catholic predecessor of the Military Ordinariate, and the Jewish Welfare Board. The fact that I dealt with them briefly does not indicate that their contribution to the religious life of the Army community was insignificant, but rather that my attention was centered on the chaplains.

Looking back at the ministry of chaplains during World War I and

the Occupation, Chaplain Elzer Des Jardins Tetreau wrote in his diary: ". . . I hope no one ever attempts to glorify the work of the chaplains . . . for that would spoil it all. The more we do and the less we say about it, the better it will be (24 January 1919)." In keeping with the spirit of Chaplain Tetreau's modesty, I endeavored to serve as one of a great "cloud of witnesses" to their ministry, and not as a publicity agent. Hopefully, any glory (or discredit) due the chaplains will be self-evident.

Though words generally fall short as an expression of gratitude, I do want to acknowledge those who have assisted me with my project. Special thanks are extended to those five persons who carefully read my manuscript and made helpful critiques: Dr. Edward M. Coffman, Professor of American History, University of Wisconsin; Dr. Robert T. Handy, Professor of Church History and Dean of Graduate Studies, Union Theological Seminary of New York; Chaplain (COL) William E. Paul, Jr., and Chaplain (LTC) James H. Young, U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School; and Dolores F. Stover.

Equally helpful were those angels of light in the researcher's world of darkness, the archivists and librarians, particularly: Dr. Elaine C. Everly and Mr. Richard F. Cox, Jr., Old Military Branch, National Archives and Records Service; Mr. John J. Slonaker, U.S. Army Military History Research Collection; Mrs. Marie T. Capps, Library, U.S. Military Academy; Mr. Constance H. Jacquet and Dr. Irene Jones, Archives and Research Center, National Council of the Churches of Christ in America; and Chaplain (COL) Dick J. Oostenink, USAR, Library, U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School.

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