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Religious Attitudes in the Young Men as Encountered in the U S Army

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RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES IN YOUNG MEN
AS ENCOUNTERED IN THE U.S. ARMY

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Pastoral Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

as defined in accord with the Armed Services Commission
done in absentia

by

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INTRODUCTION

These pages represent the observations of an Army Chaplain. They state impressions formed over a protracted period and give certain conclusions based on these observations. It should be stated at the very beginning that no claim is made for infallibility, and it is recognized that some persons would debate some points, deny others. The very nature of the subject makes this inevitable. We are dealing with a subject in which statistics have little meaning. Personal observations and impressions may be questioned. In these chapters the writer claims only to present the subject as it appears to him, others may agree or disagree with statements made.

The writer's opportunities for observation were fairly extensive. His active service in the Army began on Christmas Day, 1941, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Serving there in a Replacement Center until October of the following year, he had an opportunity to observe the men who had come from civilian life only a week before, and who were now to be molded into soldiers. For three years following the writer worked among men who were stationed in Panama as a part of the force defending the Panama Canal. He there ministered to men on various Air Bases and made frequent visits to small outposts. Four voyages on Army Transports between Panama and New Orleans

gave further opportunities to come to know men under conditions of intimacy that can be found only on shipboard. These opportunities are climaxed by duty in a hospital of the Veterans Administration where men are receiving treatment for tuberculosis. Many of these are combat veterans and some of them contracted the disease while in enemy prison camps. Bedside visits in a hospital in hundreds of cases have served to strengthen impressions received while dealing with men in the field.

It should be noted that these observations were made of men who were far removed from the dangers and hardships of actual combat. Under those conditions of extreme stress attitudes in individuals are more pronounced. Only one who has been with men in combat would be qualified to write on that subject.

CHAPTER I

THE VARIOUS RELIGIOUS GROUPS

With men drawn from every walk of life and from every class and segment of our American society, it was inevitable that the sects and divisions of American religious life should also be found in the Army, but with the difference that all of them were thrown more closely together than in civilian life. There were no divisions created by economic differences, there was no wrong side of the tracks. And while the civilian clergyman is ordinarily limited to a very large extent to work among the members of his parish, and while these in general are from one economic group, in the military service he met with men of every shade of religious belief and of no religious belief. As stated, all religious and non religious groups were represented. The following classification would be fairly inclusive.

No Religious Background

There was a fairly large segment of men without a religious background. These men were thoroughly pagan. They had received no more Christian education or training than has the native of darkest Africa. It was significant to note that many of these came from homes that had been

broken by separation or divorce. But others had grown up in normal families, and in those families there had never been the slightest trace of any religious life. Having grown up without giving any place in their life to religion, they felt no need of religion when they found themselves in strange surroundings. Whether their attitude changed in combat could be stated only by one who has observed conditions there.

These men in practically no instance availed themselves of the opportunity for religious worship. Occasionally, though rarely, they sought the service of a chaplain in a non-spiritual capacity. Further experience with such men shows that they rarely feel the need of a religious ministry even when they are critically ill and know that they will not recover. Stress and illness may serve to make a man return to religious teachings which he may have abandoned; they do not seem ordinarily to have any effect upon a man who has never known any religious loyalty. This group is not as small as many persons might like to believe.

Protestants in General

In the statistical records of the Army men were grouped into four classes for purposes of tabulation. These were Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and No Religion. As an approximation of these totals the following would serve as a fair example. Protestant, 63%; Catholic 31%; Jewish, 1%; No Religion, 5%. A unit with a large proportion of men from

the South would show fewer Catholics, one from a metropolitan area would show a higher percentage of Catholic men and Jews. But these official figures were largely without meaning. They were fairly accurate as pertaining to Catholics and Jews. As for the Protestant groups these figures were of practically no meaning. Many of the men who indicated a Protestant preference meant only to indicate that they were not Catholics. With the total church membership of the United States numbering hardly more than one half of the total population, the figure of 95% arrived at by totaling the number of those who indicated a religious preference, is obviously without meaning. The approximate 5% who indicated no religious preference included the very small number who professed atheism and those who were enemies of the Church, and others who were critical of any form of religion.

Men of Christian Science churches, Mormons, and other minority groups were counted as Protestants. Members of the Greek Orthodox Church generally attended Catholic services.

The Protestant chaplain was charged with the duty of ministering to a very mixed group. His responsibility extended from the High Church Episcopalian to members of sects that shunned every suggestion of liturgy. Obviously no order of service could be found that would be acceptable to everyone. However it was the consensus of opinion among experienced and successful chaplains that a happy medium existed which would be acceptable to the largest number of church-going

personnel. The service had to be dignified under all circumstances, not informal. It was desirable to have a Responsive Reading, the Gloria Patri, the Lord's Prayer spoken in unison. The present writer found no exception taken to the use of the Apostles Creed.

It is an acknowledged fact that church attendance in most Protestant churches is very poor. Only a relatively small proportion of the membership of a church attends services on any given Sunday. Naturally this condition would be evident also in the Army. The soldier had no family to urge him to attend, he was not induced to go by the possibility of meeting friends whom he would not otherwise see, he need fear no visit from the minister if he stayed away. In one respect this operated in favor of the chaplain, for it provided him with a very receptive audience. The man who came to church came there to worship. In twenty years in the ministry this writer has never found a congregation so appreciative as the ones he found in the Army. His hearers consisted of the very best of the membership of the various Protestant churches. The indifferent rarely came to church.

A somewhat closer look at the various groups is afforded by the following.

Calvinists - Pentecostal Groups

Under this heading would come such groups as Southern Baptists, Nazarenes, the Pentecostal and Holiness groups. They were distinguished from others by a greater degree of religious fervor than was ordinarily found among Protestants.

They also had a better understanding of the doctrines of Christianity. In most instances they were better churchgoers than others. Their reaction to such sermons as a Lutheran chaplain would preach was not altogether favorable. They were not accustomed to a sermon that was carefully prepared in advance and delivered in a dignified manner. They would have preferred an informal sermon, delivered in the style of a revivalist, abounding in stories and illustrations, and carrying a strong appeal to the emotions rather than to the understanding. While they agreed with the preaching of the truths of sin and grace, most of them probably would have maintained that a Lutheran chaplain did not go all the way in preaching the Gospel. However they would at least attend his services, whereas some of them would not do that in the case of a chaplain that preached liberalism.

The Fundamentalist Groups

Many of the leading denominations of our country harbor both Modernists and Fundamentalists among their clergy, and the lines between them are not always clearly drawn. This same difference was found in the service men from those denominations. There were some among them who accepted the saving truths of the Christian religion, there were others who did not know what a Christian believes. Many did not know of the differences between clergymen of their own church body and of the controversy between orthodoxy and liberalism. And had they known of them, they would probably have regarded the

matter as of little moment. They had grown up amidst the doctrinal indifference of modern Protestantism, and these differences seem unimportant to them. The fight against Modernism which has been carried on in such denominations as the Presbyterian does not seem to have been taken up by young laymen. This writer at least saw little that would so indicate.

Lutherans - Missouri Synod

During the course of the war our Synodical church papers contained many accounts and brought many pictures of groups of Lutheran men attending a Lutheran service conducted by a chaplain of their Church. This has led to the general belief that the men of our Church made a splendid record in the matter of church attendance. Since the end of the conflict this question has been much discussed in our circles, also in gatherings of chaplains, and of late there has been much less satisfaction with conditions as they actually were.

Pictures and reports gave only a part of the story, and that the best part. It must be remembered that in almost all cases when a distinctly Lutheran service was held, it had been arranged to serve the men of many units. If a picture showed one hundred men at a service, these were perhaps only a small proportion of the Lutheran men in the various units represented. The picture showed the men who were actually present, but there was nothing to indicate that perhaps more Lutheran men had not thought it important to attend a service

of their own Church.

There are no statistics to show how faithful our men were. The writer has spoken to two chaplains of our Church who both saw long service in infantry divisions with a large number of Lutheran men in each unit. They had received a roster of these men and in repeated instances mailed notices of Lutheran communion services. They both estimated that only one half of those notified responded even once to their repeated letters.

The writer served where changes of personnel were frequent and for that reason could not make accurate observations over a period of time. It would be possible to enumerate many instances of outstanding loyalty to Church. Many Lutheran men were regular in their church attendance. But there were many others who attended rarely or not at all. It would be unwarranted to feel that men of our Church made an outstanding record in their attendance at the services conducted by a chaplain of our Synod. It should also be noted that chaplains of other denominations found Lutherans better church-goers than were others, so the element of loyalty to a clergyman of their own Church and to its ministry dare not be over emphasized. And if Lutherans proved better than others in this matter, it was not because their record was so splendid, but rather because other Protestants were so woefully weak in this respect.

No one would seriously question that in general men of the Missouri Synod have received a better religious education than have the men of any other Protestant Church. The results were apparent, as is demonstrated by the fact previously stated that they were better church-goers than were the others. But taking all things into consideration, one may well hold that more might have been expected of them. They had received a good religious education, the home Church and the pastor maintained a contact with them in almost every instance, the Army and Navy Commission gave assurance of the concern of the Church for their spiritual welfare. No other denomination went to such expense to show its concern. True, there were many instances of outstanding loyalty. There were Lutheran men who exerted a splendid influence for good. But there were also indications to show that we must be even more determined to increase the educational facilities in our congregations, and that we must work even harder to instill a sense of Lutheran loyalty, and that not for its own sake, but because loyalty to Christ and loyalty to the Church of Christ must ever go hand in hand.

Other Lutherans

The writer had many contacts with Lutheran men and officers of other Lutheran bodies, came to know many of them very well, and often had discussions with them. In some few instances they originated in sections of the United States

where the Missouri Synod is not well represented. These men knew of our Synod only from hearsay, and their knowledge was mainly of our 'strict' stand on lodgery and unionism. Some of them confessed that they had once felt a stronger kinship to the Reformed bodies than to the Lutherans of the Missouri Synod. It was significant to note that this feeling had been lost by men who had frequently visited Lutheran Service Centers, or who had become acquainted with our members in civilian churches. Individuals from the various groups constituting the A.L.C. or the U.L.C. generally showed a lack of the awareness of the gulf between true Lutheranism and the rest of Protestantism. They did not see the evils of unionism and of lodgery as seen by a well-informed member of the Missouri Synod. However the writer found among them in many instances a far stronger sense of Lutheran loyalty than he had expected to find, and many of them also gave evidence of a very fine indoctrination. Certainly it would be an injustice to them to make the assertion that the men of the Missouri Synod showed themselves to be more loyal and more appreciative of the blessings enjoyed by the Lutheran Church.

The Effect of Modernism

Men in the armed forces of World War II grew from childhood to manhood during the two decades in which Modernism captured much of American Protestantism. But only a small proportion of the membership of the churches in which Modernism made its greatest inroads have an awareness of what

actually took place, if one may judge from the attitudes of young men. This condition is not surprising in view of the strategy of Modernists. They carefully avoided stating the issues in the controversy; better yet, they avoided giving the impression that a controversy existed. They tried wherever possible to follow the method of one minister who in a moment of frankness declared that he was changing the faith of his members, but that they did not know it. Ministers opposed to Modernism gradually died off or were relegated to small and unimportant parishes. Modernism moved in without concerted opposition. Most of the soldiers who came from church-connected homes had grown up while the change was taking place.

All well-informed men had of course heard the terms "Fundamentalism" and "Modernism"; only a small proportion of them knew what the words actually meant. A Fundamentalist was often thought of as belonging to a group that might more accurately be designated as Pentecostal or Holiness, placing great emphasis on emotionalism. The general concept of a Fundamentalist minister would picture him as poorly educated, uncultured man who was qualified to serve only among the least-educated element of our population. On the other hand, a Modernist minister would most likely be thought of as a progressive and aggressive individual, abreast of the times. Of the true distinction between the two there was little understanding. It is also noteworthy that among the very few individuals who did understand the issue, there

was rarely the conviction that adherence to Christian truth demanded that a true Christian separate himself from a church that had surrendered to error. A man might feel that his church had changed its position, he did not feel that this should compel him to leave such a church for the sake of his conscience.

If it is true that few men knew of the nature of the conflict between these two forces, this does not mean that they had been little affected by its existence. The contrary is true. Men had grown up without definite and positive instruction in Christian doctrine. In place of that he had been imbued with nothing more than a mild religious sentiment. There was little understanding of even the most elemental truths of Christianity. The average man knew woefully little about the Bible, and even that little was known mostly by hearsay. If asked upon what a person's hope of salvation must rest, the answer usually indicated some form of work-righteousness. This melancholy fact confronts anyone who looks closely at the work of the largest Protestant denominations; there is little in their work to which they can point with pride.

An Estimate Of The Future Of Protestantism

Making predictions is dangerous business, and this is not intended to be a prophecy of what may be in store for that large segment of the Christian Church which is generally lumped together under the heading "Protestantism". But a few conclusions may be stated.

To the writer it is inconceivable that any pastor who served as a chaplain should be optimistic about the future of this Protestantism. To argue simply, as many do, that at long last the various churches have learned to work together, and that therefore the future is bright, is too shallow to warrant consideration. In order to thrive a church must have a firm foundation, and the Protestantism above referred to has no such foundation, for much of it has abandoned the only Foundation a church can have. The present tendency to view with alarm the progress of Catholicism is not the answer. As long as conditions remain basically as they now are, it may be expected that Protestantism will continue to lose ground to Romanism on the one hand, and to a growing paganism and materialism on the other hand.

If Protestantism is to recoup any lost ground or even to hold its present position, it must again learn to speak with authority. It must learn to say again, "Thus saith the Lord". It must return to a Gospel that is revealed from heaven. It must learn again that its strength must come from God, and not from human organization and unions. It must concern itself with men's souls rather than with their temporal wellbeing. Having done that it must revitalize its teaching agencies and give its members a thorough instruction in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No measures short of the above will be sufficient to bring about a flourishing Protestantism.

The question arises whether Lutheranism can be of any assistance to Protestantism in bringing this about. Whether it owes any such obligation to heterodox churches will not be considered here. Suffice it to say that under existing conditions its influence cannot be expected to be great. The many divisions within Lutheranism are sufficient grounds for this claim. As long as it cannot combine all Lutherans in a united stand for the truth, it cannot expect to speak to non-Lutherans with any degree of authority. It must first set its own house in order. Furthermore it would have to have a corps of men who are recognized as outstanding scholars in various branches of theology even more than is the case today. Then its pastors must be better prepared to face the world and testify boldly, with authority and with ability, overcoming the present tendency to remain aloof lest our position be endangered. To sum up: Lutheranism still has much to achieve before it can exert a great influence on the rest of Protestantism.

Catholicism In The Army

The Catholic Church enjoyed the most satisfactory position of any religious group in the Army. The Catholic chaplain was practically the pastor of a Catholic congregation. Whereas a Protestant chaplain was charged with the responsibility of conducting religious services to which men of many religious groups were drawn, normally the Catholic chaplain ministered only to men of his own faith. While Army Regula-

tions provided that a chaplain should conduct a general service for men not of his faith when no other chaplain was available, this was rarely done. The writer knows of only one instance where a Catholic chaplain conducted a general service, and that was a temporary arrangement. And it was generally understood that a Protestant chaplain could not conduct a service that would be acceptable to men of the Catholic faith.

To all essential purposes then, a Catholic chaplain ministered to a Catholic parish on an Army post. He observed all the holidays and performed all Catholic rites. Usually a daily mass was held. Confessions were heard on a regular schedule. Usually there were men who were receiving religious instruction, generally parties to a mixed marriage. Such men would be confirmed by the civilian Bishop who held jurisdiction in the area if the opportunity afforded. The same advantageous position held by the Catholic Church in American civilian life was also enjoyed in the Army. Its ability to gain special privileges was evident. It was a generally accepted fact that no pains dare be spared to make it possible for a Catholic chaplain to meet his appointments, and that provision must be made to allow Catholic men to worship. There was much less concern about services for Protestant men. High ranking officers would frequently go out of their way to pay a compliment to Catholic chaplains or to the Catholic Church.

The efficiency of the hierarchy was demonstrated in the selection of its chaplains. Wide publicity has been given to statements and articles comparing Protestant and Catholic chaplains to the discredit of the former. In the opinion of this observer that criticism was often justified. While he observed Catholic chaplains who were totally unfitted for their office, these were not many. Usually their men were well chosen, while the quality of other new chaplains dropped steadily as the war grew longer. Usually the Catholic chaplain enjoyed the respect of all men. He usually evidenced qualities of leadership. He had learned better than the average Protestant chaplain how to get along with men. He could be loyal to his religious beliefs and practises, insist upon his rights if necessary, and not make himself ridiculous in doing so. This could not be said of all Protestant chaplains.

From a strictly religious point of view, however, the Catholic chaplain was often deserving of censure. In too many instances to be dismissed as exceptional, he was given to profanity. Often he was an inveterate gambler, and not only in games where the stakes were small. Public drinking in officers clubs and elsewhere was the common practice. The man-made laws of the Church, such as those demanding fasting before mass were scrupulously obeyed, the much higher laws of God were often ignored. Army Regulations too were often flaunted, but the Church was obeyed.

Usually the Catholic soldier carried his loyalty to his Church into the military service. Often his first inquiry upon arriving at a new station was the whereabouts of a Catholic chaplain. He was usually provided with an abundance of religious medals, and a Protestant chaplain would sometimes be asked to bless some medal newly received, being mistaken, of course, for a priest. But this loyalty often showed itself to be a loyalty to outward forms and ceremonies, and sometimes it was superstition rather than faith. Often his religion made no effect upon his life. He could be just as profane as a non-religious man. There was also this difference between Protestants and Catholics. When a Protestant man went wrong morally, he usually stopped attending services. He felt that his sin had created a break with the religion he had professed, and that joining in worship would be an act of hypocrisy. A Catholic man guilty of the same offense would generally continue in his religious observance, in fact would sometimes grow more zealous in attendance upon the outward observance of religious duties.

CHAPTER II

ATTITUDES IN INDIVIDUALS

The following attempts to set forth the beliefs and concepts of the average service man. In a large group of men there will naturally be a great range of understanding. A relatively small proportion will give evidence of a good religious training and a fine Christian understanding. At the opposite extreme will be found a relatively small group with virtually no opinion about matters religious, and no interest in the subject. The writer feels that the following sets forth the position of the large middle group. How were these impressions obtained? In several ways. Some from personal conversations with individuals. In the course of a day a chaplain would engage in conversations with perhaps dozens of men, and in these almost any kind of a subject might be discussed. In other instances they were obtained at second hand. Every chaplain had a circle of friends consisting mainly of those who were most faithful in their Christianity. In Bible Class or in discussion groups the chaplain had many contacts with them and came to know them intimately. Singly and in small groups they might appear at the chaplain's office in their idle hours. These in

turn would often speak of their contacts with others, and of the endless "bull sessions" in barracks and elsewhere with which men sought to relieve the tedium of a monotonous existence. Some might feel inclined to doubt the validity and the value of impressions so obtained, anyone who has experienced Army life will not find it difficult to understand.

Concept Of God.

The average man believes in a personal God. But he has few ideas of the nature of that God. This is one of the evil results of the failure of churches to have an effective agency for the religious training of children. The God in whom the man professed to believe was not One to whom he felt closely related. He would have no inclination to profess that "in Him we live and move and have our being". Only the man with a better than average religious education knew the most elementary truths about the Triune God. He had heard the terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but he had virtually no conception of their meaning. Some regarded these names as different ways of speaking of the same Person. There was little understanding of Christ as the pre-existing Son of God. There was only the most hazy notion of the work of the Holy Ghost. The pupil in a Lutheran confirmation class who has completed the study of the Creed had a far better understanding of the nature of God than does the average youth.

Of God's Providence. The Individual's Need of God

But if the knowledge of God was very hazy, there was a surprisingly strong belief in God's providence. A man's conception of God might be ever so vague, but he did believe that the universe was ordered by God and that God also shapes the destiny of the individual. Thus many men were sure from the very beginning of the war that our nation would triumph over its enemies. Our enemies advocated an evil cause, but we were on the side of right, therefore God would help us to gain the victory. Perhaps this belief could be traced to the influence of the Social Gospel in modern Protestantism, with its belief that in the end good must always triumph over evil. Men were also quick to see in the bountiful harvests of the war years an evidence that God favored our cause and another indication that our cause was just.

Since belief in God's providence was common, it was also natural that there should be acknowledgment of God's goodness when some special blessing had been received. On an Air Base where everyone was aware of the hazards of flying, and where narrow escapes were frequent, there was a general readiness to express the belief that in certain instances only God's protection had averted some accident. The expression, "The Lord was certainly watching over us", was often heard, and it was not meant as an idle statement. In the case of outstanding military achievements there was a desire to give thanks to God. Services of thanksgiving for

the successful invasion of Europe were attended by large numbers. When Japan surrendered, and after many reports and denials of surrender had created general confusion, and had caused previous plans for a service of thanksgiving to be abolished, the authentic announcement of final victory brought considerable numbers of men to Army chapels, driven by a spontaneous desire to give thanks to God.

It was only natural that as a result of the lack of definite religious education many occurrences would raise questions that could not be answered satisfactorily. In the event of accidents involving death to military personnel, the inevitable question of "why this man"? was asked, and of course no satisfactory answer could be given. In other instances men simply resorted to fatalism. "His number was up", "His time had come". Sometimes too there was superstition. Thus the writer frequently observed among men who were uneasy about travel by plane, a very evident satisfaction when they found that a chaplain was also going to travel on the same plane.

But there was little or no evidence that men generally felt the need of a living relationship with God. They did not feel a need of God, but rather the need of the things that God could give. They wanted His protection, His bounty, His blessing, but they did not feel that they needed His presence in all their life. There was little evidence of spiritual hunger, of thirsting after a righteousness that

only God could supply. To be joined to God by faith in Jesus Christ, to believe that everything must be done in the fear and love of God, all this was foreign to the thinking of the average service man. The general attitude was that a man might need God in life's emergencies, but as long as things were going reasonably well there was no need to be concerned about man's relationship with God.

There is a slight possibility that this picture of the situation is drawn too darkly. The service man who professed to be a Protestant was very reluctant to give expression to the truths he believed in his innermost heart, much more so than was the Catholic man. It is possible that deep down in his heart there was a stronger faith and a deeper understanding than surface appearances would indicate. But from what could be discerned in ordinary conversation, the above would be a description of his general attitude.

Concept of Sin

The service man was always a realist, and for that reason there was no inclination to deny that sin exists. He looked upon such things as adultery and drunkenness as being sinful, but that would not necessarily keep him from becoming guilty of them. Perhaps the best illustration of this attitude is in the matter of profanity. Men knew that the misuse of God's name was sinful, no attempt was made to deny that. But the individual guilty of the sin would sometimes attempt to excuse his conduct by saying that he "didn't mean

anything by it". With this sin as with others, the mere knowledge of the fact that they were wrong was not enough to keep men from committing them.

There was no general understanding of the real nature of sin. Men did not regard every sin as an affront to God. They did not believe in man's total depravity and in God's wrath over even a single sin. If one may judge by the attitude of the men in the armed forces, the concept of original sin is no longer held by the average member of most Protestant churches. To assert that a little child is by nature sinful would have met with a quite general denial. There was a general belief that man is not perfect and that he commits sins, but there was no inclination to regard this as a serious matter, and to believe that man must find a way to be cleansed of his sin. Whether men in combat, aware of the possibility of death at any moment, showed a greater awareness of the real nature of personal sin is a question that cannot be answered here. But among others there was little or no evidence of a sense of personal guilt, no general consciousness that man must in some way find deliverance from the guilt of his sins.

Concept Of Grace

With a very imperfect understanding of the nature of sin and of man's guilt, it is natural that there could be no proper concept of the grace of God. Since they did not really know the Law, there could be no proper evaluation of the

Gospel. True, men did believe that God would forgive. But how this was to take place and what is the ground of forgiveness, of these matters there was a general lack of knowledge, and indifference. Most views held showed reliance on self-righteousness. Granted that every man commits some sins, if he also does some good things, the good will cancel the evil. Some of the views held were even more unworthy of God. Perhaps the man would not have stated it quite so bluntly, but often he seemed to think that God does make some very exacting demands, and that men do not measure up to those demands, the threats against sin will not be carried out as severely as men once believed. In the end all men will be saved, except for the very wicked like Hitler, and men who wilfully fight against God.

The above is not intended to mean that there were no men who know the way of salvation. It is intended to represent what might be called the majority view. There were men who trusted in the grace of God in Christ Jesus. But these men were in the minority even among those who had been regular church-goers before entering the Service, and they did not ordinarily come from the larger Protestant groups. In private discussions with men who had a religious background, it was frequently found that the teaching of "sola gratia" had never been grasped. Where it has not been completely crowded out by the social gospel, synergism has at least been permitted to undermine this comforting and assuring doctrine of the Christian faith.

Authority Of Scripture

As far as the writer knows no surveys were made among service men to determine their knowledge of the Bible. Had such a survey been made, it would have revealed an abysmal ignorance. Most of the men with whom chaplains dealt had attended Sunday School. But it was very evident that most instruction in Sunday School had not led to a good knowledge of the Bible. Nearly every man carried a New Testament, but that does not imply that he was a regular and earnest reader. Even his casual reading was usually limited to the Gospels; of the remainder of the New Testament he knew very little.

The writer made it a general practise to conduct one or two Bible Classes. The attendance would consist almost entirely of those who were most inclined to take religion seriously, and who had been in the habit of attending Sunday School as civilians. But even among these it was the general practise to consult the index when asked to refer to some Bible passage. Nor can the Lutheran Church claim that it is the exception, and that its members have a good general knowledge of the Bible. The Lutheran who knew his Bible well was the exception and not the rule. It was also true in some instances that a Lutheran might know much more about his catechism than about his Bible.

It was generally acknowledged that the Bible is the highest authority in all things spiritual. There was little or no inclination to question its account of historical facts, as far as these were known to the individual. The Flood, the Exodus, the occupation of the Promised Land, something of

the reign of David and Solomon, these were the historical facts of the Old Testament generally known at least in outline, and they were accepted without question. The main historical facts of the New Testament centering about the life of Christ were also matters of fairly common knowledge, and they were likewise accepted.

In matters of doctrine there was likewise a willingness to accept the teachings of the Bible as being the highest authority, but with certain limitations. Human reason was not to be ruled out completely. The average service man, for instance, would accept the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper rather than the Lutheran. It was more reasonable to him and was therefore to be preferred. He believed too that some statements in the Bible were vague and could be interpreted in several ways, and one interpretation might be just as good as the other. He did not see any great necessity for insisting on purity of doctrine. To sum up, in theory he accepted the Bible as authoritative. But in fact he knew comparatively little about it, and he did not feel that it was imperative for him to increase his knowledge.

It should be stated that there was usually a small number of deeply religious men who were diligent readers of the Bible. It was not unusual for little groups of kindred spirits to meet for the express purpose of reading the Scriptures. Generally these were from the smallest sects and would have to be branded as fanatics. Usually they

placed all emphasis on certain pet doctrines to the disregard of others, and sometimes insisted that a certain terminology must be employed. The writer recalls one man who insisted that a Christian minister must "preach The Blood", and held that the refusal to be bound to preach the Gospel in those identical words was a refusal to preach the Gospel properly.

Nature And Purpose Of The Church

To the average service man the word "church" had to be used with some denomination in order to have any meaning. It had to be the "Presbyterian Church" or the "Baptist Church". Usually he was not familiar with any doctrine of the Invisible Church. The use of the Apostles' Creed in public worship often brought forth inquiries about the meaning of the term "The communion of saints". His conception of the Christian Church was that it was an outward organization of many parts and groups, each group consisting of a body of people who had voluntarily affiliated with it, some for selfish reasons, but most because they believed it a good thing to belong to an organization of such high nature. In his thinking the Church was merely a visible organization.

The purpose of the Church was to offer men inspiration and instruction and in general to keep the things most worth while before them. There was only a slight conception of the Church as a teaching agency. While it was to prepare men for eternity, even this was only in an indirect way. Its main purpose was to help men live a proper life, and if a

man lives a proper life he will be prepared for eternity. Many believed that a person could live just as satisfactorily outside of the Church as within it. To separate from a congregation, or simply to stop attending services because of some dissatisfaction was not regarded as a serious matter. Many believed that a person could live just as well outside of the Church.

Every chaplain frequently encountered men who claimed to be members of a certain denomination even though they might not have attended a service of that church in many years. They seemed to believe that just as a person automatically becomes an American citizen by being born of American parents, even so one might in the same way become a member of the Methodist Church. Another curious trait was the reluctance of persons to transfer their church membership when changing their residence. They might attend church in their new home and contribute to its support, but they would hold their membership or "keep their letter" in their former church.

Distinction Between Churches

To most men the divisions of the Christian Church are regrettable and unnecessary. They felt that most churches should unite, not in order to remove the errors which separate them, but in order to operate more efficiently and to remove the rivalry between the various denominations. The belief that doctrinal differences separate them and that errors

keep them apart, was not generally held. The doctrinal differences of which men were vaguely aware were differences of emphasis more than differences in substance. The average man could see no great difficulty in the way of a union of most Protestant bodies.

The situation with regard to the Catholic Church was somewhat different. To the Catholic service man the thought of union with any other church was of course unthinkable. Among men of Protestant background there was a general anti-Catholic sentiment, even though it was generally mild. Men disliked it because of its strict stand on some questions, because of its dictatorial stand in matters of the religious life of the individual, and because of its unique modes of worship. Seldom was the anti-Catholic sentiment due to the fact that this church has in countless instances forsaken the basic teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

The Mission Of The Christian Church

The mission of the Christian Church, as the average man thinks of it, has been alluded to in the foregoing. He does not see it as an institution established by God to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments in order that by these means of grace men might obtain eternal life. Most men seem to think of the Christian Church as being helpful rather than essential, helpful because it speaks out against evils, and because it always supports the good. But its main work is to be seen in this world rather than in the next.

Some Conclusions

The Christian Church does not stand as high in the esteem of most men as all lovers of the Church desire. Men do not give it that honor we would like to see it receive. Various reasons can be given. The Catholic Church is disliked because of its strict stand in some matters, because of its rites and ceremonies that are strange to many, and because many of its adherents give no evidence of any uplifting influence in their life. Protestant churches are not always held in respect, and likewise for a variety of reasons. Hollywood portrayals of Protestant congregations might well be considered as one reason. The manner in which these churches are portrayed in most modern writing is another. The conduct of members who profess one thing and practice another has played a part. But perhaps the largest single fault lies with the clergy. The ministry has attracted too many second-rate men, and in many ways these have contributed to a decline in the standing of the churches in the eyes of the public. If the churches are not universally esteemed, candor compels the admission that they do not always merit esteem.

It is also noteworthy that most Protestant churches do not have a strong hold on their members. Any church worker in the field of home missions labors under an unwarranted assumption if he believes that most people feel the need of membership in a church. As long as conditions in

the world remain about as they are, and as long as the churches carry on their work as at present, there will be less and less ground for this assumption. The Protestant denominations in general are gradually losing their influence over their own people, and they are slowly declining in the esteem of non-members.

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS READING

Periodicals Little Read

Extensive libraries were provided on installations that were of a more or less permanent nature. Religious organizations quite generally availed themselves of the opportunity to provide denominational publications. But these were not read by any large number of men. Even the most faithful church members showed little inclination to keep themselves informed of developments in their own church body. Men of the Missouri Synod were no exceptions. Walther League Messengers were displayed prominently on the chapel tract rack, but only rarely were copies carried away unless the chaplain suggested to individuals that they take a copy.

Tracts And Pamphlets

There was a greater interest in tracts. Procured from various sources and displayed in the vestibule of the chapel, these were inspected by many persons, and the supply had to be replenished constantly. A mimeographed Sunday Bulletin with the order of service and other brief items was always welcome, and most copies were retained and carried from the chapel. In the experience of the writer

the printed sermon and order of service provided by our Army and Navy Commission and made available for general distribution, did not find a great demand. First put on display at a time when little religious literature was available, many copies were taken. Thereafter, they generally remained on the tract table.

Books By Aasch, Fosdick

The better libraries had a small section of religious books. Since most reading was for the purpose of relief from boredom, fiction was most in demand. However there were always a few men who were interested in non-fiction, and who would read a book of a religious nature if it held out promise of having something to offer. The books by Aasch and Fosdick were perhaps the most read. But they did not seem to create a sufficient impact to call forth much discussion.

The Robe

A very popular novel among all classes of military personnel was The Robe by Douglas. For a long period there was a waiting list in one library, though several copies were in circulation. Its appeal was alike to Catholics, Protestants and non-religious men. It was widely discussed and was uniformly praised. Yet in very, very few instances was there any reference to the issue it must present to any thoughtful reader. This novel depicts Christ as being no more than a man, yet few readers seemed to regard that as

a serious fault even when that was called to their attention.

Dearth Of Scholarly Conservative Books

Every library maintained by the Armed Forces demonstrated a very significant deficiency that likewise exists in every civilian public library. There is a lack of scholarly books by writers of conservative religious beliefs. The writer finds that in his hospital work he is at a disadvantage over against Catholic chaplains in this respect. They have some excellent materials to set forth their position. There is a crying need in Lutheran and Protestant circles for books that are scholarly and which do justice to Evangelical Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

ATTITUDES AND CONDUCT

Ranking Officers Of The Regular Army

The treatment of this subject might best begin at the top, among the highest ranking officers. Normally the positions of highest authority were occupied by men of the Regular Army with the rank of Colonel or General. To generalize about a group of men is always hazardous, and it must be stated that the writer personally observed a few men of high rank in the Regular Army and heard of others who appeared to be men of high character and conduct. But these men were in the minority. It was more common to find men in high positions who seemed to be utterly lacking in all moral perception. In many instances generals were known to live in illicit relationships with women, and sometimes parties were held on Army posts with high ranking officers in attendance, or even sponsored by those officers, which could only be classed as orgies. Outside the limits of the Continental United States where public sentiment was not a force to be reckoned with, men in high positions could cast aside all restraint, and there they often showed themselves to be utterly without morals. Money provided by the people of the United States for the waging of war was

squandered to satisfy personal whims. Luxurious planes and yachts were maintained for the use of generals. In rare instances where some member of this group was accused of some irregularity or offense, there seemed to be a general agreement to have him escape punishment altogether, or to receive a punishment much less severe than a minor officer or an enlisted man would have received for a lesser offense. Some of these officers were graduates of the United States Military Academy with its motto: "Duty, Honor, Country". There was little evidence that these noble qualities played any part in the lives of these men as they pursued their career in the Army.

In the interests of fairness one fact should be mentioned here. The above observations were made very largely of officers of the Air Force. The possibility exists that other branches of the Service might have been administered by men of higher character. The officers in the age group now in control in the Air Force entered that arm when flying was more hazardous than it is today and appealed primarily to the reckless and irresponsible young officers of a generation ago. By good fortune these survived, and by virtue of their long service won positions of importance. Their main interest has remained the piloting of a plane, and the fact that all of them have known scores of men who have been killed in the intervening years, has served only to make many of them fatalists whose main concern is to eat, drink, and be merry.

Non-Career Officers

Holding positions below the above described group was a larger number of officers who had not made the Army a career. Most of these were men who in civilian life had not joined in excesses such as those that were common on every Army post. They could be described as coming mainly from the upper middle class of our population. Many of these took very naturally to the prevailing customs when they found that conformity was expected. Others not in sympathy with such conduct found a way to avoid the more flagrant affairs. But instances of outspoken objection and protest were very rare. Even those who were bitter in their criticism knew that there was no effective way of registering any protest that would not be smothered by officers in higher position.

Responsibility Toward Spiritual Welfare Of Men

In theory each commanding officer is responsible for the welfare of the men of his command. That responsibility is a carry-over from feudalism. It extends not only to their physical welfare, but also to the spiritual. This latter obligation is expressly stated in Army Regulations.

Compliance was fairly general. On posts and bases of the Panama Canal Department, places of worship were eventually provided, though the construction of a chapel was generally the last step in any building program, whereas clubs for officers and enlisted men were among the first.

The dedication of a chapel was usually an event of importance and was attended by ranking generals. In most instances the address of the day was delivered by a general who invariably spoke of the great value of religion. But in most instances it was a matter of common knowledge that the speaker would not enter another chapel until his position once again required that he appear at another dedication.

As noted above, it was the duty of each commanding officer to make sure that the men of his command were given the opportunity to worship. But in practise responsibility was usually delegated to the chaplain or chaplains of the unit and the commanding officer rarely showed any further concern about the matter. Also on the lower levels of command chaplains often had occasion to feel that the attitude and conduct of the officer in question was a hindrance rather than a help to the work of the chaplaincy.

The Officers Club

It is no exaggeration to state that on some Army posts conduct reached its lowest levels in the officers club. This level was determined by the commanding officer, and in most instances he imposed no restraints. Virtually every officers club of which the writer has knowledge would have been designated as a public nuisance and closed by the police in any respectable area in an American city.

Contrary to common belief, liquor was on sale in officers clubs, and was consumed in large quantities. The liquor shortage in the United States was probably due in

large measure to the fact that large shipments were going abroad for use in officers clubs. Drunkenness among officers was common. Gambling by means of slot machines, card games, and dice, flourished, nor was this for small or moderate stakes. In many instances hundreds and even thousands of dollars were at stake. In addition to this, most clubs regularly conducted gambling nights when almost every kind of game of chance was sponsored by the club, the club receiving a percentage of every stake. The proceeds from gambling alone were sufficient to provide each club with large sums of money.

The worst feature of most clubs were the dances sponsored as often as conditions permitted. Female guests were recruited from Army nurses and civilian employees of the Army. Sometimes planes were made available to provide quick transportation to otherwise inaccessible places. These dances often became drunken revels. In instances certain posts became notorious for the revels conducted there to such an extent that generals in command of the area would issue orders to exercise a measure of restraint. But it seemed likely that the intention was to minimize the notoriety achieved rather than to stop bad conduct.

It is not claimed that all officers drank to excess, gambled, or took part in orgies. There were officers who completely avoided the club when such affairs were in progress. Others attended as observers until the general conduct became offensive. But it cannot be said that the evils were committed by a small fraction of the officers of any post.

Among Enlisted Men

It would be difficult to state whether the level of conduct was higher among enlisted men or among officers. The enlisted men, however, did not have as many opportunities for shameful conduct as did officers. Certainly the conditions described were known to enlisted men, and they were bound to have their influence on the conduct of the soldiers. They had very accurate sources of information about the conduct of officers, and in some instances the sounds of revelry from the officers club could be heard in their barracks. What they heard was a source of disgust to some, and encouraged others to cast aside restraints on their own conduct.

Language

In no other group of society is the use of profanity and obscenity as common as among military and naval personnel. The position of the individual made no difference, men in the highest level of command were just as profane as were common soldiers. The case of one high ranking general who became notorious for his cursing, was not exceptional. The writer recalls one instance in which a commanding officer, after a long and blasphemous address to the officers of his command, stated that he regretted having to use profanity, but that he could not otherwise give emphasis to his statements.

Profanity of every kind became so much a part of the language that no attempt was made to avoid it by most persons, or even to use it sparingly in the presence of ladies. There

were many individuals, both officers and enlisted men, who seemingly could speak hardly a sentence that was free from profanity. Later observation in a Veterans Hospital indicates that many men have discontinued the practise, especially in the presence of ladies.

The prevalence of the sins of profanity and obscenity was one of the most disagreeable things with which a Chaplain had to contend. He could testify against them in his sermons, and such testimony was necessary, for even the better class of men who usually constituted the Chaplain's congregation, were by no means without blame. But to rebuke all bad language was obviously impossible. Many a chaplain upon his return to civilian life felt a sense of relief upon being able again to move in circles where no profanity was heard.

Drinking

The general public probably has little conception of the prevalence of drinking to excess as it was found in the Army. While an attempt was made to give the impression that temperance and moderation were encouraged, this was not the case. As a sop to public opinion the War Department did once issue an order that no liquor was to be sold in officers clubs. This order was evaded or ignored outside of the United States. Every social gathering at an officers club ended with many of those present, of both sexes, in an intoxicated condition. Promotion parties were notorious in this respect. Lacking even that excuse, however,

many officers regarded it as a normal thing to reach some degree of intoxication each Saturday night. Even in the Air Force, in an occupation which demands the greatest physical and mental alertness, it was not a rare thing to find men deep in their cups only a few hours before they were scheduled to fly. While there were some officers who never drank, and others who never drank to excess, the number of these was not as large as might be desired. Nor does the writer know of any influence toward sobriety brought to bear from higher authority. Drinking in an amount that must be considered excessive was regarded as the normal thing.

The enlisted men had access to beer gardens. No hard liquors were served here. Conduct often became somewhat boisterous here, but there was little actual drunkenness that could be traced to the beer garden. For more potent liquors the soldier had to seek some source outside the post. If legitimate means did not provide a ready source, some method of bootlegging was found. Regulations provided that no alcoholic liquors be kept or consumed in enlisted men's barracks, but these were ignored, and no semblance of an attempt to enforce this regulation was made. Soldiers were rarely punished for drunkenness, and sometimes drunkenness served as a mitigating circumstance in some other offense. Many officers believed that an occasional spree was a good thing for a soldier and served to relieve mental tension.

Many a soldier living in a barracks knew that he could expect little sleep on Saturday night and on the night of pay day. But drinking to excess was certainly no more common among enlisted men than among officers. If a careful comparison could be made, it might well be found that the soldier had a better record than the officer.

Morals

Immorality has always existed in armies. How moral or immoral the men of our armed forces were in World War II cannot be determined. The statistics which report on the incidence of venereal disease offer no guide.

In this matter the leadership in our Army was seriously at fault. It seemed to assume that the soldier would, at least on occasion, be given to immorality. Little or no attempt was made from highest authority to encourage chastity. While Army Regulations directed that the Chaplain periodically deliver a morality lecture, this was not always done, and in some instances the message of the chaplain was contradicted by the address of the line officer. The program of the Army was focused on the prevention of venereal disease, and not on the promotion of true morality. Some officers openly expressed the opinion that it was a good thing for a man to have sexual relations occasionally, whether illicit or not. True, there were instances in which officers took a proper stand. In numerous instances the writer also heard doctors of the Medical Corps who stressed true morality.

But the men in highest position were often sadly

lacking in this respect. This was often true of their example as well as their precept. In certain instances generals and other officers of high rank associated with women of doubtful morals or openly kept a mistress. Her presence in the area would be justified by her status as a secretary. It is significant that the most glaring of these instances were among officers of high rank. Most junior officers lived above reproach in this respect.

Gambling

In open disregard of regulations gambling was a very general vice. Among enlisted men it was most prevalent on pay-day and for a short time thereafter. Games of various kinds began almost as soon as the first men were paid. In many instances the sums of money at stake were not large. But there were other instances, by no means rare, in which hundreds of dollars were at stake. In many organizations there could be found one or more men who to all intents were professional gamblers and who sent home or otherwise deposited sums of money running into thousands of dollars.

But it was in officers clubs that gambling was carried on to a far greater extent. All clubs counted on a certain amount of revenue from slot machines. Games of poker were in session at almost any time a group of officers assembled in the evening. Many clubs also made it a practise to conduct one or two special gambling nights each month. Known as "Monte Carlo Night", these would see games of almost every known method of gambling, with the "house" backing the games

and receiving a part of all winnings. In these games large sums of money were wagered. The amount of money in play on a dice table often amounted to more than a thousand dollars, and it was no uncommon thing for an officer to win or lose hundreds of dollars in a night. It was inevitable that occasional scandals would result from high stake gambling. This might result in a temporary moderation of conditions, but never in a lasting reform.

The Effect Of Mass Living

The Army offered an outstanding opportunity to observe the results of mass living. These cannot be described as otherwise than degrading. Cut off from most of the salutary influences of our civilization, deprived of a normal family life, lacking the influence for good that women so often exert, with much leisure time, often engaged in tasks which they did not like, having monotony to contend with at all times, men can easily let themselves deteriorate and acquire habits and engage in activities they would otherwise avoid. When men in large numbers are forced to live closely together and shut off from most other associations, it usually brings out the worst that is in them.

CHAPTER V

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Exaggerated Claims

In the early days of the war when the Army was trying in every way to gain the good will and the support of the American people, the work of the chaplains seemed to make good "copy". Reporters and feature writers cast aside all restraint, and the impression left with the general public was that service personnel was flocking to religious services in amazing numbers, and that here at last the various religious denominations had found the way to lay aside their differences and to work together as one group. Both impressions were false.

As to the first claim. Probably it could be shown that the service men in this war attended services to a larger extent than did the men in World War I. If this was the case, the explanation probably lies in the fact that opportunities were offered to men in the late war which had never before been offered to men in any army. One chaplain who saw service in World War I as an enlisted man once stated that in his entire service, which included a period spent overseas, he had not so much as seen a chaplain, let alone known one personally. While this was certainly an exceptional case,

it is a recognized fact that never before in our history was the religious work in the Army carried on as extensively as during the late conflict.

But this does not mean that most men worshipped regularly. Again it should be stated that conditions in combat may have changed the picture; this purports to describe the conduct of men who were not in combat. Anyone who had prolonged duty as a chaplain will have his doubts about pictures that show congregations running into the thousands. Such a picture may show a "command performance" where men were ordered to church, or where pressure of some kind was applied. When attendance was purely voluntary men did not ordinarily attend in such great numbers.

The writer kept a careful record of the church attendance at various bases on which he was stationed during a tour of three years in the Canal Zone and in the Republic of Panama. If a graph were made to show attendance at the various stations, it would show approximately the same conditions prevailing at each station. In the beginning of his work attendance would be very small. Several reasons might be given. In at least two instances he was assigned to stations where the former chaplains had been considered failures. Another reason is the fact that a chaplain was always on trial when beginning a new assignment. Having had experiences in which the chaplain had turned his services into revival meetings and called upon individuals in an attempt to "save"

them, soldiers were inclined to be wary until a chaplain had established himself. The faithful few would attend, and then if reports were favorable, attendance would show a gradual increase. A third factor in an increase was that the chaplain through personal contacts could gain something of a personal following.

The increase in attendance would continue until the normal attendance had reached a total of 10% or 12% of the total personnel of the station. There it would level off and remain more or less stationary. Only some unusual event would bring about any marked deviation. The percentage indicated above was considered a very excellent record in that area and was well above the average. This fact is stated not as a boast, but in order to give a clearer picture of conditions in general. By way of further comparison it might be stated that attendance at Catholic services held on the same station would be approximately 15% of the total personnel. Accordingly, the total church attendance on a normal Sunday would aggregate about 25% of the men stationed there.

As to the other claim of religious cooperation between the various faiths, this too was greatly exaggerated. In the main it consisted of cooperating in externals, and in no more than that. It involved such items as arranging schedules for the use of chapels, and of arranging for Catholic services for men in units having only a Protestant chaplain, and vice

versa. The Catholic men on any station were virtually a Catholic parish, and as separate from the other groups as if they had been in a civilian parish. While a Protestant chaplain was held to minister to all men of Protestant churches, he did this by conducting such a service as he would have done in a civilian church, and all who wished were free to attend. Lutheran chaplains and Episcopalians usually conducted a denominational service in addition, or held at least a periodic communion service for men of their faith. Occasionally other Protestant chaplains conducted a joint service, but usually conditions were such that this was possible only rarely.

Though many regarded a chaplain as being a clergyman able to minister to men of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faith, anyone who had opportunity to observe must concede that the chaplain who attempted to do that proved to be a failure. Aside from all considerations of a confessional nature, as a simple matter of expediency, it was advisable for a chaplain to be a clergyman of his own Church and not to pretend to be anything else than that. The attempt to be all things to all men in the unscriptural sense was bound to end with his being little to anyone.

Various factors played a part in determining church attendance. Some of these are enumerated in the following.

Prolonged Absence of Opportunity

Though an honest attempt was made to give all personnel an opportunity to worship regularly, there were circumstances

that made this impossible at times. Particularly in the early days of the war when the work of the chaplaincy was not as well organized as it later became, there were instances where large numbers of men were without the services of a chaplain for a prolonged period. In a particular instance in Panama an air base with almost 1500 men had no chaplain for almost a year. There were repeated requests from enlisted men that a chaplain be assigned there. When finally that request could be granted and regular services were held, the attendance was very small. Though opportunities for recreation were very limited, and though monotony was a serious problem, the men did not attend church even though it offered them one of their few opportunities to escape boredom. It required several months of persistent effort on the part of the chaplain to bring the normal attendance to a level approximating 5% of the personnel. It was demonstrated again and again that a fair level of church attendance could be maintained only when regular Sunday morning services were held. It also appeared that a chaplain could be effective only when he was regularly assigned to minister a group and when he could mingle with the personnel and become well acquainted. Services by itinerant chaplains had to suffice at many places, but they were never largely attended.

Small Posts And Irregular Services

The complexities of modern warfare, and methods of defense often cause small groups of men to be assigned to

duties in locations that are remote and difficult to reach. In the air forces these groups are usually engaged in maintaining air warning stations or in some form of communications. Normally these men were given opportunities to worship at infrequent intervals and even these could not be regularly scheduled in advance. Under these conditions only the most faithful Christians regularly availed themselves of the rare opportunities to worship which were offered to them.

It was demonstrated again and again that the longer men were without the opportunity to worship, the less did they feel the need and the urge to worship. Spiritual life can be maintained only through the regular use of the Word of God, and the weaker that life becomes, the less does the hunger for worship assert itself.

The Example Of Officers

Among the factors playing a part in inducing men to attend religious services was the example of their officers. Normally if a good proportion of officers were regular attendants, this had a wholesome influence of bringing the enlisted personnel. But it was not true in all cases for the popularity of the officer seemed also to have a bearing. But to illustrate the influence of officers, one example might be cited. For a number of Sundays the attendance at one station was approximately fifteen. More than one half of these were officers, including the colonel in command. By the end of the second month the attendance had increased

to about sixty persons at each service. In those instances, unfortunately rare, where ranking officers showed a sincere interest in religious matters, it always gave impetus to the work of the chaplaincy.

Differing Attitudes In Different Organizations

When all external factors have been taken into consideration, the fact remains that certain units had a much better record of church attendance than did others. For the difference no explanation can be given. The writer had occasion to observe this closely. He was stationed for almost two years at a heavy bomber base. Squadrons were rotated from base to base, and some of them twice stationed here during his stay. Some squadrons attended church better than did others, both as to officers and enlisted men. In all squadrons the duties were identical, they lived under the same conditions. No reason could be assigned for the fact that some squadrons were better church-goers than were others.

It may be pertinent to make another observation in this connection. In the regular discharge of their duties and in the performance of their tasks as well as in the state of their morale, some squadrons were better than were others. It is significant to note that the best squadron in these matters was also the best squadron in its record of church-going.

Proportion Of Officers And Non-Commissioned Officers

Repeated surveys or spot checks were made by chaplains to find from what level of Army life most church-goers came. These surveys were informal and unofficial and were not broken down to exact figures. But they were usually accurate enough to give a fairly clear picture. In most instances the proportion of the officers of any station who attended church was slightly higher than that of the enlisted personnel. Among officers of flying status it was higher, sometimes far higher, than it was among non-flying officers. Bomber pilots were better church-goers than fighter pilots, usually by a considerable margin. Among enlisted men the men with ratings attended far better than did privates. On the basis of considerable observation it may be safely maintained that the more intelligent and better educated men were normally the better church-goers.

Influence Of Accidents And Deaths

Some mention must be made of this. While in combat men were said to grow hardened to the dangers of death, in non-combat aviation in the circumstances under which these observations were made, that was not the case. Casualties were not infrequent, and they always had a sobering effect. When planes were lost at sea and only a memorial service could be held for the victims, practically all available personnel attended the service. For some weeks thereafter

the attendance at regular services showed an increase. But after a few weeks when memory of the tragedy had been dulled, the effect on church-attendance could no longer be noticed.

Influence Of Chaplain's Standing

This was perhaps the greatest single factor in determining church-attendance. The status of the chaplain might vary considerably from base to base. He might be considered a very important member of the staff of the commanding officer, or he might be regarded as a nonentity. Which of the two it would be depended largely on the chaplain himself. Even though the commanding officer might not be a religious man, he would generally regard himself as fortunate to have a chaplain who was respected and liked. If the chaplain could win and hold the respect of the officers and the enlisted men alike, if it was known that he held the respect of the commanding officer and could exercise influence there, then he could be certain of a good attendance at the services he conducted. It could be repeated that the individual chaplain had to win that place for himself, and it was not given him until he had demonstrated his fitness for it. But if, as sometimes happened, the chaplain demonstrated his unfitness for his task, if he possessed the qualities that sometimes bring disrespect on ministers in civilian life, if he catered only to officers, or only to enlisted men, then, in all likelihood the attendance at his services would be limited to the minority who shared his particular views, or who were

bold enough to defy the opinion of the majority.

Attitude Toward Lutheran Preaching

In general this was favorable, perhaps very favorable. The nature of his training and his conception of his office made it natural that a Lutheran chaplain would avoid many of the mistakes that robbed others of their effectiveness. The preaching of some chaplains was largely a diatribe on the evils of drunkenness, gambling, cursing and other sins that flourished in the Army. While he did not condone these sins, the Lutheran chaplain by his preaching of Law and Gospel had the only effective means of combatting them. Some chaplains by their evangelistic and emotional fervor held little or no appeal to any save a very limited group. The Lutheran chaplain who regarded it as his duty to bring the great truths of Holy Writ to his hearers naturally avoided that error. Perhaps the most unfruitful ministry in the Army was that of the chaplain who held the modernistic view that he must preach on the causes of the war and blueprint the new world men would build after the war. The Lutheran chaplain who believed that he must preach Christ Crucified avoided that mistake, and won for himself a larger congregation by doing so. It would undoubtedly be the consensus of opinion among Lutheran chaplains that their preaching proved popular to men and officers alike, popular in the true sense of the word.

In the interests of accuracy it should be stated that the office of the Chief of Chaplains of the Army made a survey

of the attendance at services of all chaplains held over a period of one year, and reported that the attendance at services of Missouri Synod chaplains was about 11 percent below the average attendance of all chaplains. Just how this fact may be explained is puzzling. While reports of attendance made by some chaplains were obviously "padded", this may not wholly explain the difficulty. It may be that Lutheran chaplains conducted more services, since they usually conducted a denominational service in addition to other services. Whatever the explanation may be, in the observance of the writer, Lutheran chaplains enjoyed a larger attendance at their services than did other Protestant chaplains.

Just how much this fact may contribute to a better understanding of the Lutheran Church by the general public remains to be seen. It must be borne in mind that the average church-goer in the Army did not attach any great importance to the denominational affiliation of the chaplain. He was either a good chaplain or he was not, his sermons were considered good or not good. In either case the average hearer would not be likely to think of the preaching as representative of an entire church body.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION OF CHAPLAINS

Qualities Making For Popularity

These may be stated very briefly. The first requirement made of a chaplain by both officers and enlisted men was that he be able to conduct himself as a man among men. He had to be able to mingle with both groups without showing a preference for either. It was also a decided asset to a chaplain to be able to hold his own in the strenuous athletic contests that played a part in keeping personnel in good physical condition. In one particular instance a chaplain nearing the age of sixty enjoyed the high esteem of enlisted men because he could participate in long training marches and show no sign of fatigue. Having established a reputation as a man, the chaplain then had to prove himself truly a minister. Often men were not at all concerned about their own conduct, but they did expect that a chaplain live up the high demands made upon a minister of the Gospel. Men always expected more of a chaplain than they expected to find in other men. But once a chaplain had demonstrated that he was a real man and a man of definite religious convictions and practises, once he had demonstrated that he could meet all men as equals and that he was genuinely concerned about the welfare of

others, then he was accepted and respected. His position was improved immensely if he also demonstrated that he possessed a sense of humor. Once he had won the respect of the command his position was perhaps the happiest of any man in the Army.

Qualities Making For Unpopularity

During the war and since the war much has been written about chaplains. Much of what has been written, especially of Protestant chaplains, is rather critical. Fairness and accuracy demand the admission that there were many chaplains who were no credit to the chaplaincy. The following were the more common reasons.

As in the ministry, so also in the chaplaincy, there were some who were not qualified for a position of leadership. They were weaklings. It will always remain a mystery how men of this type received the approval of any endorsing agency, but the unpleasant fact remains that some of them found their way into the chaplaincy. Sometimes these men, conscious perhaps of their inadequacy, sought to gain favor by being very cordial, but succeeded only in making themselves ridiculous. They were respected by no one. In a large command one or more chaplains of this kind could usually be found. They caused the term "Sad Sack Chaplain" to be coined. They were worse than useless.

Another mistake made by some chaplains was to think of themselves as officers rather than chaplains. They were sticklers for form and considered it their duty to reprove

men for infractions that were purely military. While it was expected of a chaplain that he personally observe the requirements of military usage, it was resented if he tried to assume any of the functions of other officers. An empty chapel on Sunday would soon face such a chaplain. Enlisted personnel wanted the chaplain to be a minister, not a disciplinarian.

Some chaplains forfeited the respect of both officers and enlisted men by attempting to be good fellows. How many such there were cannot be stated, but any person with many contacts sooner or later met men of that kind or heard reports of them. Such chaplains usually said that it was their aim to be a man among men. They became careless of their language, sometimes drank excessively, and often joined in gambling. Their conduct gave no evidence whatever of any spiritual convictions. While they were accepted by those with whom they associated most, it is doubtful whether even these men had any high respect for them. One of the peculiarities of military men was the fact that they themselves very frequently acknowledged no restraint upon their own conduct. But they did expect that a chaplain live on a higher level and that he meet the requirements made by the religion of which he was to be an exponent. They would not excuse in a chaplain the things of which they themselves were guilty. Any chaplain whose conduct was blameworthy was not respected and the attendance at such services as he conducted was very, very small.

Emphasis On Spiritual Qualities-Doctrine

In the foregoing the attempt was made to show that Army personnel expected their chaplain to be a spiritual man. They expected him to be a man of God, whatever they might be themselves. And they expected his preaching to be of a religious nature, not a lecture on social problems, and not related to orientation lectures which all personnel was required to attend.

While a soldier expected to hear a real sermon when he went to church, it did not matter much to him what its doctrinal content might be. The service man in this war was the product of the last two decades, in which religious indifference had reached an all-time high in our country. He had heard again and again that the Protestant churches were very much alike and that any difference in doctrine was of a minor nature. Accordingly he did not care much whether the chaplain was a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian, a Baptist or a Lutheran; he was acceptable as long as he delivered a good sermon and did not resort to emotionalism. The lone exception to this general attitude was that of some Lutheran men. They were more exacting in their requirements. They could recognize Lutheran preaching when they heard it, and often were not satisfied with any other kind.

This fact might also be borne in mind by those Lutheran pastors who have expressed the fear that returning service men would show less Lutheran loyalty as a result

of having heard chaplains of many denominations. Perhaps the years that have elapsed since the return of most service men have dissipated those fears. To the writer this attitude has always seemed to reveal a lack of confidence in Lutheran doctrine and in Lutheran education. Certainly no Lutheran pastor ever had reason to fear that a clergyman of any other denomination had a better message to proclaim. If the Lutheran minister made the sincere effort to proclaim his message as that should be done, he had every reason to believe that returning service men would welcome the opportunity to again worship in their own church and to hear the Gospel as they would not hear it elsewhere.

Soldiers Preparing For The Ministry

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ once made a survey to determine how many service men contemplated preparing for the ministry at the end of the war. Chaplains were asked to submit the names of those who had expressed that intention. A subsequent announcement revealed that several thousand names had been submitted. If the experience of the writer is typical, the men who expressed that intention show promise of becoming very good ministers, better than the average now found in American Protestant churches. Their Army experience will make them better ministers than they would have been without it. And in every instance that was personally observed, these men were truly Christian and in

some instances were openly critical of the Modernism that has crept into many denominations. Unless liberal teachers in divinity school destroy their faith these men may bring about a greater orthodoxy in present-day Protestantism.

CONCLUSION

The only claim the writer would make for the content of these pages is that he has not tried to make out a case in support of some pet belief or theory, but that he has tried to present matters as he saw them. The picture thus presented is not a pretty one. Contrary to common belief the average American does not have a fair understanding of the central truths of the Christian faith. The Lutheran minister of today in his dealings with those who are not members of his church, and particularly in his attempts to do mission work, would be wise to proceed on the assumption that he is dealing with a person who does not know what the Christian religion is and what it offers. He will not often be wrong in making that assumption.