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THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ARMY CHAPLAINS IN
THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first study of Church of Scotland chaplains serving with the Army during the Second World War. It explores the way in which the Church of Scotland accepted the challenge of the Second World War and how the Presbyterian chaplains were recruited, trained and how they performed their ministerial duties under wartime conditions. The thesis opens with an examination of the Church of Scotland during the inter-war years, with particular attention to the background of those ministers who were ordained in the 1930s and who were later recruited as Army Chaplains from 1939-45. The discussion highlights pacifism, anti-Semitism, and the Scottish response on the German Church struggle. The thesis then considers from a Scottish perspective the history of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and the involvement of the Church of Scotland Chaplains' Committee in looking after the interests of Presbyterian chaplains and Scottish soldiers at home and overseas. The thesis considers the factors which led ministers to enlist as chaplains, and assesses the training which they received. It shows how Scottish chaplains integrated with both officers and men and the contribution they made to the moral and spiritual life of many units. Inevitably a number of chaplains were captured in the course of their duty and taken as prisoners of war. This thesis includes a chapter on ministry in the POW camps. The thesis includes two case studies on the wartime experiences of the Very Rev Prof. T.F. Torrance and the Very Rev Dr. R. Selby Wright. Torrance was enlisted into the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation and saw active service in Italy. Selby Wright meanwhile enlisted as a TA chaplain in 1939 but was later seconded to the BBC as the "Radio Padre". Finally, this thesis concludes with a chapter in which the chaplains are allowed to reflect on their wartime experience and an assessment is made of the overall work and worth of this particular wartime ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of this study I have been indebted to a number of people without whose help, support and understanding this thesis could never have been written. First and foremost I want to thank my wife Grace and my sons Andrew and Thomas. I began this project before Thomas was born and during the past four years I have spent too much time researching and not enough time with my family.

After a brief sojourn in the Department of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology I was rescued by Professor S.J. Brown and drawn into the Department of Ecclesiastical History where I have always felt most at home. A term as a part-time tutor and the constant supervision of Professor Brown has made this research an education. I am indebted to Professor Brown for his supervision, his timely suggestions, his gentle correction and encouragement, his eye for detail, as well as making time to see me in his own otherwise busy schedule.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this research was interviewing former Scottish Chaplains in their own homes. Sadly many have since died but I would like to thank them all for the time they gave me and the rare and personal insights that they so willingly shared with me. I only hope that this thesis has done justice to the trust I was afforded by these veterans. I am especially grateful to the Rev Tommy Nicol who gave me exclusive access to a survey that he conducted amongst veterans in 1979-80 and whose findings are reflected in this thesis.

As a serving Army chaplain I was given access to the entire records of the Church of Scotland Chaplains Committee which date back to 1860. For this I would like to thank the Honorary Secretary Mr Douglas Hunter. Major (Retd) Margaret Easey, Departmental Secretary of the R.A.Ch.D. Association, pointed me towards both journal articles, war diaries and papers that were important to this thesis. No one, however, has done more to find references, often with the merest of biographical information, than Marjory Farmer, Librarian at the University of St Andrews. Without her help this thesis would have been unworkable.

In regard to funding I am grateful to the generosity of the Principal of New College for granting me a Church of Scotland Ministers scholarship. To the Rev John Cairns, Convener of the Church of Scotland Chaplains' Committee. To the Rev Dr Victor Dobbin, the Chaplain General, for his financial support and encouragement to complete this thesis. And to the Hope Trust for their most generous funding.

Finally, I would like to thank all those friends and colleagues in the Army who have taken an interest in this thesis and who have encouraged me to complete the task. Encouragement has always been welcome but it was the desire to learn more about the exercise of the Christian Ministry in the professional Army that has always been my motive.

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In battle all superficialities of life have been stripped away. You do not know whether you will survive the next day or not...it could have been me...there is an openness to that reality and the chaplain is the only person who can speak to that reality...the faces of the men told of the reality of the war...it is unforgettable and God touches men in these situations. The chaplain who has gone through the campaign is the only person a man can turn to, because whether you like it or not you are apart of that experience...Ministry in battle is beyond comprehension.¹

D.H. Whiteford
Church of Scotland Chaplain

This thesis was written by a serving Church of Scotland Army Chaplain. It is a study of ministers from the Church of Scotland who saw service in the Army as chaplains during the 1939-45 war. While there have been a number of studies dealing with chaplains during World War One², there has been little equivalent work on the 1939-45 War. The thesis makes passing reference to the work of chaplains from other churches, not least because as far as the War Office was concerned all chaplains were recruited, trained and administered in war under the same constraints and conditions, regardless of denominational allegiance. However, the focus is on the chaplains in connection with the Church of Scotland.

The thesis is, moreover, restricted to Scottish chaplains serving with the Army rather than with the Navy and the Air Force. The large majority of chaplains enlisted during the Second World War and indeed in all other campaigns this century were employed in Army service. This in no way undermines the important contribution made by Scottish chaplains who served in the other two services and with the merchant marine.

¹ D.H. Whiteford, Taped interview, Gillan, 29 Oct 1993.

²For example, A. Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War. (London 1978) and S. Mews, "Religion and English Society in the First World War", unpublished PhD diss., Cambridge, 1973, cited by S.J. Brown, "A Solemn Purification by Fire: Responses to the Great War in The Scottish Presbyterian Churches 1914-19", The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 45, No. 1, Jan 1994.

Sources

Taped Interviews.

The core source used in this thesis was a series of taped interviews, collected by the author during 1993-94. Those interviewed included twenty Church of Scotland ministers who had been chaplains with the Army during the Second World War. The tape recordings, which amount to some 25-30 hours of material, will be deposited in New College library as part of 'The Church in Modern Scotland Project', upon completion of this thesis.

Some of the chaplains interviewed were in uniform for only a relatively short time. Others had a much longer period of service - for example, the Rev Dr David H.C. Read, who was captured at St Valery in the early days of the war and spent nearly five years in a POW camp. Some left the Army as soon as possible after hostilities ceased while others continued to serve on in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and to make this form of ministry their full career. Of those interviewed six eventually became Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Surveys.

Extensive use has been made of two personal surveys of World War Two veterans which prior to this thesis were hitherto largely neglected. The first was compiled by the Rev Dr Tommy Nicol in 1979-80. Nicol had served in the Black Watch both as an officer and as a chaplain during World War Two. He went on after the war to serve a full career in the RACHD before becoming the Church of Scotland minister at Crathie and Domestic Chaplain to H.M. the Queen at Balmoral. Nicol conducted his survey amongst veterans of the Second World War. A copy of the "Nicol questionnaire" that forms part of this survey appears at the end of Chapter 4.

A second survey was conducted by the author in November and December 1994 through an advertisement placed in the Sunday Express, Life and Work, British Legion News and the Regimental Journals of the Scottish Division. The advertisement invited World War Two veterans to report on and to assess their experiences with chaplains

during the war. Twenty-six replies and letters were received in response to this survey. While some were simply letters of commendation, others provided detailed accounts of the work undertaken by Scottish chaplains.

Church of Scotland Chaplains' Committee Records.

Through the aid of the Convener and Honorary Secretary of the Church of Scotland Chaplains Committee the author has had full use of the entire records of this committee, whose records date back to 1860. This is, apparently, the first time the full committee reports and papers have been used for the purposes of academic research, although A.C. Dow had made some use of the Committee minutes in the research for a thesis on, "Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland. 1856 -1945."³ The Chaplains Committee papers show how the Church monitored the progress of its chaplains during their military service. They also reveal how the Committee defended the position of the Scottish national Church and the interests of the Scottish Presbyterian chaplains at both the War Office and Chaplains' Department.

General Assembly Records.

A detailed analysis of the annual Reports to the General Assembly from 1919-1955 has been made. While paying close attention to general reports, e.g. Education for Ministry and the annual Chaplains reports, the reports of war-time sub-committees, such as those on Huts and Canteens or the Church and National Service were also closely examined.

Royal Army Chaplains' Department Records.

³ A.C. Dow, Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland 1856-1945, unpublished dissertation. This was a follow up thesis to a book Dow had previously published entitled, Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland. A history of the Military Chaplains of Scotland prior to the War in the Crimea. (Edinburgh and London 1962.)

As a serving Army chaplain the author has had access to the records of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and to the archive material held in the RACHD museum.⁴ With the help of the Departmental Secretary the author has consulted articles published in the Royal Army Chaplains Department Journal, and has had access to previously unpublished articles, diaries and papers in the Chaplains' Department archives relating to Scottish chaplains during the Second World War. In addition, the author was permitted to consult personal record cards and files retained by MOD Chaplains (Army) on all former and serving chaplains. These materials proved useful in confirming units of attachment and service details for Church of Scotland chaplains.

War Office Papers.

For the official government background and perspective upon the Army Chaplains' Department the author was allowed to consult the hitherto closed files and the official papers relating to chaplaincy held at the Public Record Office at Kew and at the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh. In addition the author had access to unpublished War Office material held by MOD Chaplains (Army). War Office documents held at the Imperial War Museum, the Seaforth and Cameron Highlanders' Museum, the Royal Scots Museum, the Black Watch Museum and the Scottish United Services Museum also proved to be rich resources. The Regimental Secretaries of the Regiments of the Scottish Division, especially Col. Angus Ferrie from Fort George, directed the author to a number of important and previously unworked primary sources.

War Diaries, Journals and Notebooks.

The Coulter survey advertisement placed in the newspapers and Regimental magazines elicited a number of unpublished or privately published war diaries. Two

⁴ With the closure of Bagshot Park, the former home of the RACHD in 1996, the museum and its archives have been placed in store prior to being reestablished at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre, at Amport House, sometime in 1998.

diaries of particular note were discovered. The first, written by Rev Eric Rankin, was privately published in 1978 and loaned to the author by the Rankin family. Eric Rankin was minister of Holy Trinity Church St Andrews. He was captured while serving as a chaplain at St Valery on 14 June 1940. The diary records his war from his enlistment in October 1939 to his release from a German POW camp in May 1945.

A second important diary held by the RACHD museum was written by the Rev Dr R. Stuart Loudon. He was a Church of Scotland chaplain and was captured at the fall of Tobruk in 1941. The diary records Loudon's life as an Italian POW. He later became minister of Greyfriars Church of Scotland Church in Edinburgh.

Following the recording of a taped interview with the Rev A.I. Dunlop, he produced both a diary and a notebook and journal that he kept during his long military service. With meticulous precision Dunlop had taken notes during the lessons he received while chaplaincy training and on the way in which he conducted his ministry during the war. This material had never before been used for academic research and remains in Dunlop's personal possession.

Personal Papers.

During the conduct of this research a number of former Scottish chaplains gave the author access to their personal papers and letters relating to the war. Apart from those already mentioned the personal papers of the Very Rev Dr R. Selby Wright, the Very Rev Prof T.F. Torrance, the Rev Dr T. Nicol and the Rev G. Monro all proved to be important. Further, the personal papers and correspondence of the Rev Prof D. Cairns, including his war diary, were consulted in the National Library of Scotland.

The Selby Wright papers reflect this Scottish minister's vast experience as Army chaplain, author and 'Radio Padre.' His personal papers contain the previously unpublished correspondence relating to Selby Wright's secondment from the Army to the BBC for eighteen months as a full time radio presenter. In addition Selby Wright gave the author access to his personal library, including rare copies of many of his

printed works, including his radio talks and his monthly contributions as editor of the Scottish Forces Bulletin during the war years.

The John White papers held in New College library also proved to be a valuable resource. Although extensively used by A. Muir in his biography of White⁵, the papers contain much important and hitherto neglected information on the pre-war history of the Church of Scotland. White, moreover, was actively involved during World War Two as Convener of the Church and National Service Committee and was closely involved in the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation.

Edinburgh University Student Records.

In chapter one of this thesis extensive use was made of the minute books of the New College Missionary Society and the Edinburgh University Theological Society records. These records provided the author with a unique insight as to what some of the theological students in the pre-war years at the University of Edinburgh were discussing. They reveal a level of debate by the student body on a broad range of issues such as anti-Semitism, pacifism, theological education and mission, practical theology, field work and the developments in the German Church. This source provided insights into the early thought and development of those Scottish ministers who were later to volunteer as Army chaplains during the War.

Biographies.

At the time of preparing this thesis a number of autobiographies of war-time Scottish chaplains have been published. Works by the Rev Prof Murdo Ewen Macdonald⁶, the Very Rev Dr Leonard Small⁷, the Rev Dr D.H.C. Read⁸ and the Very Rev Dr J. Fraser McLuskey⁹ have all proved important. Similarly a number of memoirs

⁵ A. Muir, John White, (London 1958).

⁶ M.E. Macdonald, Padre Mac: The Man from Harris, (Stornoway 1993).

⁷ R.L. Small, The Holy Goalie, (Edinburgh 1993).

⁸ D.H.C. Read, This Grace Given, (Michigan 1984).

⁹ J.F. McLuskey, Parachute Padre, (Herts 1985) and The Cloud and the Fire, (Durham 1993).

by chaplains of other Churches, for example D. Wild in the Church of England¹⁰, or by soldiers like the Scot, Donald Smith¹¹, have helped the author to place the experience of the Scottish chaplains in the larger context. More general biographies, including R. Ferguson's, George MacLeod¹² have also proved to be useful.

Thesis and Dissertations.

The author has consulted a number of unpublished theses. For example, the thesis by A.C. Dow provided a useful background and summary of the Scottish Church and its ministry to Scottish soldiers. Similarly a thesis completed at the University of Glasgow by E. Annesley, a former Army Chaplain and Senior Chaplain Scotland, was important. Further, Jolyon Mitchell of the Department of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology at the University of Edinburgh has generously permitted the author to consult the section on Ronald Selby Wright from his forthcoming doctoral thesis.

THESIS OUTLINE

Chapter one, the Church on the home front, 1919-1939, describes the background and experiences that shaped the men who became the Church of Scotland chaplains in the Army during World War Two. Beginning with the experience of the Great War this chapter moves on to examine the leadership and direction given to the Church of Scotland by veterans of the First World War and the developments and trends in the Church of Scotland during the inter-war years. The focus is upon theological education, continental influences, pacifism and the experiences of a number of chaplains prior to the date they enlisted into the Army.

Chapter two deals with the recruitment and selection of Army chaplains. It opens with a brief history of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department from a Scottish

¹⁰ D. Wild, Prisoner of Hope, (Sussex 1992).

¹¹ D. Smith, And all the Trumpets, (London 1954).

¹² R. Ferguson, George MacLeod, (Edinburgh 1990).

prospective. It considers the Church of Scotland chaplains in the context of the Church in the Army and it highlights the developing role of the Church of Scotland Chaplains Committee within the Army. The chapter then moves on to examine how Scottish chaplains were recruited during the 1939-45 War and how the decision of individual ministers to enlist had to be balanced against the demands of the Church at home. The question of how and when some Scottish ministers made the decision to enlist is explored through individual case studies.

Chapter three examines the training and preparation of ministers for operational service. While chaplains, like medical doctors, had already been professionally trained when they were recruited, they none the less had to be taught how to practice their vocation in an operational setting and under battle conditions. The Royal Army Chaplains' Department transformed its approach to training during World War Two. This chapter looks at the experience some Scottish chaplains had in basic training and in continuation training, including pre-invasion battle inoculation training. Finally, we consider how some Church of Scotland chaplains volunteered for special duty and training as chaplains with the Parachute Regiment, the Special Air Service and the Commando Forces. The final section of this chapter deals with the introduction of the Padre's Hour and how the chaplains were employed in developing the moral character of both officers and men.

Chapter four examines the role the Scottish chaplains played on active service and in the front line. Special attention is given to the brotherhood of chaplains serving with the Eighth Army and under the direction of a future Chaplain General, the Rev F. Hughes. In all seven phases of war, from the approach to battle to the final memorial service, the chaplain had an important role to play. This chapter follows a selection of Scottish chaplains as they encountered the various phases of war.

Chapter five explores the experiences of a number of Church of Scotland chaplains who were taken prisoner during World War Two. Particular attention is given to those who volunteered to stay on in captivity, rather than exercise their right

to early repatriation, in order to minister to POWs held by the Germans, Italians and the Japanese.

Chapter six contains two case studies of “alternative war time ministries.” More Church of Scotland ministers volunteered to become Army Chaplains than were needed and not all offers of help could be taken up. Some men therefore enlisted as chaplains in one of the other services. Some offered themselves as combatants. Many others stayed at home and undertook additional war-time duties. During World War One the Church of Scotland had joined with other Scottish Churches to provide huts and canteens welfare support for Scottish troops both at home and overseas. At the outbreak of World War Two the Church of Scotland again offered this valuable service to the Armed forces. The Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation worked closely with the Council for Voluntary War Work and the chaplaincy services in particular. A number of Scottish ministers, including T.F. Torrance, worked alongside Church of Scotland deaconesses to provide this important welfare support. Another alternative and specialist war-time ministry undertaken by a Church of Scotland chaplain was the work done by Ronald Selby Wright when he was seconded from the Army Chaplains’ Department, on full pay, to the BBC to become the ‘Radio Padre’. Here he broadcast regularly and acted as a travelling reporter and correspondent for both the BBC, the Church and the Chaplains’ Department.

Finally, chapter seven on demobilisation, offers some final reflections on the chaplains’ war-time experiences and considers how those experiences affected their theology, their view of the Church and their future ministry. The thesis ends with an assessment of the collective experience and the lessons learnt by the Church of Scotland chaplains who served with the Army during the Second World War.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHURCH ON THE HOME FRONT

1919 - 1939

When my father was minister of Govan Old Parish Church I was allowed on occasion to sit in the study (till nine o'clock) and listen as my father and old friends of the First World War swapped tales. He had been a chaplain, serving with the London Scottish in Palestine and Mesopotamia and then in France in 1918 with the 1/6 Highland Light Infantry (HLI). The reason he had these old friends along was with much more purpose than mere reminiscing and a dram, though that did help the evening along. They were planning the formation of a branch of Toc H, that imaginative movement for the welfare and self-help of serving and ex-service men. This was over the winter of 1929 - 30, a time of deep industrial depression. In the spring of 1930 my father died, I was thirteen. I never met any of father's HLI friends again, and when it became obvious in 1938 that my generation would be involved in a war I remembered those old comrades meeting so happily together, planning more constructive things than war ...¹

This personal reminiscence by the Rev Tommy Nicol, one time Minister of Crathie and former Senior Army chaplain, reveals something of the ongoing spirit of the Church of Scotland in the interwar years. The Great War did not bring about a revival of religious interest in Scotland. The decline in church attendance already evident at the end of the nineteenth century showed no sign of abating. Despite pre-war confidence the churches failed to assert any real influence or leadership to the whole people of Scotland either during or after the war. Nevertheless the Church had an important role to play in the life of the Scottish people. Despite its lack of popular appeal the Church of Scotland continued to address its own internal problems and divisions and attempted to raise concerns for the moral and spiritual well being of the nation. John White of the Barony Church in Glasgow, a former Army chaplain, was tasked with forging lasting links with the United Free Church. Along with other Scottish churchmen like George MacLeod and many other First World War veterans,

¹ T.J.T. Nicol, Ordinary Chaplain, (Unpublished memoir), p.1.

White was influential in helping to define the direction of the Church of Scotland in the interwar years.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the background of the ministers who would become the Church of Scotland chaplains of the Second World War. This chapter will be sub-divided into the following five sections: (I.) After the Great War. (II.) The Inter-War Church. (III.) Theological Education. (IV.) Continental Influences, including Anti-Semitism. (V.) The Pacifist Movement.

I

AFTER THE GREAT WAR

Six months after the Armistice, in May 1919, “there were 2086 permanent Army chaplains still serving. Of these 1165 were Church of England; 357 were Roman Catholic; 189 were Presbyterians; 194 were Wesleyans; and 167 belonged to the United Board, which comprised Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists, and United Methodists [the remaining 14 may have been Jewish chaplains]. Of the 189 Presbyterian chaplains, 79 belonged to the Church of Scotland However, the total number of Scottish ministers who had been on active service as chaplains during the course of the Great War was 278.”² In addition, a great many ministers and students for the ministry played an active part in the war effort in other ways. An appendix to the Report of the Committee on Chaplains to His Majesty’s Forces presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May 1919 lists the names of 69 ordained ministers of that Church who had joined the army as combatants.³

In England, ministers of the national Church were not allowed to engage in combatant service. In September 1914, Randall Thomas Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, made it clear that Anglican students and priests were not to bear arms.

² Report on The Committee on Chaplains to His Majesty’s Forces, to The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 29 May 1919, p.308.

³ *Ibid.*, p.325.

The Archbishop expressed the opinion that, “the role of an active combatant was incompatible with the position of anyone who sought and received Holy Orders.”⁴

North of the border, on the other hand, ministers freely enlisted as both combatants and non combatants during the 1914-18 War. According to J.R. Fleming, “a large number of ministers enlisted as soldiers, some dying heroically on the field. Students and probationers for the ministry did not as a rule wait for the enactment of conscription, but freely offered themselves ...”⁵ To do so was exciting as well as patriotic. As one young man remarked: “Caught up in the thrill of those days in 1914, it was difficult to resist the appeal of the adventure enlistment offered.”⁶ Augustus Muir, the biographer of John White of the Barony Church, Glasgow, remarks that White, “deeply believed that it was a righteous war; a war in which the Kingdom of God was being challenged by the forces of evil aggression. Soon he was in demand at recruiting meetings and patriotic rallies.”⁷

The Church of Scotland played an active role as recruiting agent in the early days of the Great War. One man who was encouraged to join up by the sight of a minister on a recruiting stand was Lewis L.L. Cameron. He was later invalided out of the Army and found his way into Aberdeen University and then the divinity hall and ordination. In his autobiography Cameron tells of how he had gone with some friends on a Saturday evening early in 1915, to listen to patriotic speeches by prominent citizens and Army officers on a recruiting stand:

It did not strike me as strange then that one of the platform party was Colonel the Rev James Smith, a Senior Army chaplain and minister at St. George’s in the West Church ... Smith approached our group and asked why we had delayed our enlistment in the face of the country’s need. Having no adequate answer and being overawed by the Colonel in the clerical collar, we agreed to join up ...⁸

⁴ Archbishop of Canterbury, letter, Glasgow Herald, 4 Sep 1914.

⁵ J.R. Fleming, The Church of Scotland 1875-1929, (Edinburgh 1933), p.97.

⁶ L.L.L. Cameron, Opportunity My Ally, (London 1965), p.31.

⁷ A. Muir, John White, (London 1958), p.177.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.31-32.

Many Presbyteries passed resolutions to encourage recruiting. In 1914 the General Assembly refused to debate the issue of how or where a minister might serve his country best. A Commission of the Assembly which met in Edinburgh in November 1914 agreed to leave this question to individual conscience and to the discretion of the Presbytery. By September 1915 however lists of casualties and missing persons filled the local papers and such were the losses that Church leaders were no longer so sure what they ought to be saying. As one recent student of the period has observed, "The events of 1915 and the years that followed were to bring many hard questions home to the churches in Scotland."⁹

In interpreting the war many Scottish Churchmen were convinced that they had entered a righteous crusade. Regardless of a long-established religious connection with the enemy they now faced, Scottish Presbyterian preachers and writers criticised Germany for breaking treaty pledges and for its invasion of neutral Belgium: "Germany was the aggressor; it had 'willed' the war, committing a 'crime against humanity unexampled in history.' Britain has entered the war in self-defence, to preserve its liberty and its empire."¹⁰

During the First World War the interests of Presbyterians in the Army were looked after by the Rev J.M. Simms, an Irish Presbyterian. As a senior serving Army chaplain at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, Simms had deployed to France, along with 65 other chaplains, as Principal Chaplain with the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.). In July 1915 the War Office decided that a Bishop should be appointed to the B.E.F. with the appointment of Deputy Chaplain General. His function was to take charge of all Anglican matters including the administration of all Church of England chaplains. Simms was therefore left to care for the other denominations.

⁹ Eustance Annesley, "The Response of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland to the First World War," Unpublished MTh Dissertation, (Glasgow 1991), p.58.

¹⁰ S.J. Brown "A Solemn Purification by Fire; Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches 1914-1919," The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, (Jan. 1994), p.3.

After the 1914-18 War, the Irish Presbyterian Church decided to mark not only the great personal achievement and contribution to the war effort that Simms had made, but also to acknowledge the work and worth of all Army chaplains. This it did by electing Simms as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for the year 1919-1920. In his opening address as Moderator to the Irish General Assembly, on 2 June 1919 Simms commended to the Assembly the work and worth of chaplains during the Great War:

I have been Principal Chaplain of the British Armies in France from the outbreak of the War till the end, and have no doubt in my mind that the cause of religion has gained immeasurably by the crucial ordeal to which it has been subjected. Values have changed but the eternal verities have survived and now make their appeal to the human heart with enhanced power. The chaplains came into this strange environment of the Army and were subjected to an ordeal of duty which had little resemblance to their ordinary peaceful vocation, but they rose to the occasion like the rest.¹¹

Simms clearly believed that chaplains of all denominations, who had been plucked out of the familiar and traditional parish setting, and placed into the hard, violent, even strange setting of military chaplaincy, had served both the Church and the cause of religion well. “We were fighting for our very existence,” Simms remarked, “for liberty, for hearths and homes, and for all that our race stands for in the world.”¹² The Church clearly had a place in the midst of the fighting.

Later in his opening address to the Irish Assembly Simms observed that “the Commander in Chief (CinC) has placed on record that it was not so much the superiority of material resources and scientific devices that ultimately won the war, as the amazing spirit of the men.”¹³ Elsewhere, the CinC is reported to have said, “The

¹¹ J.M. Simms, address to the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, delivered as Moderator of the General Assembly at its opening meeting on 2 June 1919, p.8.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

devoted efforts of Army chaplains of all denominations have contributed incalculably to the building up of the indomitable spirit of the Army.”¹⁴

General Sir Douglas Haig was the British Commander in Chief on the Western Front from 1915 - 18 and went on after the war to become Commander of the First Army Corps and later Commander in Chief. He was particularly indebted to the ministry of the Rev George Duncan, a Church of Scotland chaplain, who became Haig’s personal chaplain at the height of the conflict. In the view of Gerald de Groot, “Haig’s religion provided a sense of order and meaning, but little in the way of comfort or inspiration ... but at the time when Haig’s responsibilities became greatest, in stepped Duncan, who provided Haig with the spiritual comfort and moral reinforcement previously lacking in his religious worship.”¹⁵

George Duncan later earned renown as a New Testament scholar and as Principal of St. Mary’s College St. Andrews. He perceived his war time mission, “not just to serve God, but also to serve Haig.”¹⁶ According to Haig, Britain was “fighting for Christ and the freedom of mankind.”¹⁷ In May 1919, six months after the Armistice, Sir Douglas Haig addressed the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He was invited to speak both as the Commander of the victorious armies and as a sincere Christian who was an Elder of the Kirk. He took this opportunity to commend to the Church the need for “Spiritual unity” for, he believed, “that would be the best basis for a true reconstruction of society.”¹⁸ It is to the basis for reconstruction in the Church of Scotland that this chapter must now turn.

When Captain George MacLeod M.C. of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders left the Army at the end of World War One he was a changed man. His biographer, Ronald Ferguson, observed that MacLeod did not suddenly become a

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.7 and 9.

¹⁵ G. J. de Groot, “We are safe whatever happens. Douglas Haig, The Reverend George Duncan, and the conduct of War 1916 - 18,” Scotland and War AD 79 - 1918, ed. N. Macdougall, (Edinburgh 1991), p. 93.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.197.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.200.

¹⁸ Fleming, p.99.

pacifist because of the carnage that he had witnessed during the Great War. Nor was MacLeod challenged in his politics because of the conditions that his men faced. Likewise, Ferguson denied that George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Community, was unduly influenced in either his pacifism or his socialism by his mother's Quaker background.

What is more certain is that George MacLeod returned from the War determined to give up a career in Law and to become a minister of the Gospel. However, as Ferguson points out, these were still early days in the development of MacLeod's theological thinking: "His theology was still very much morality and duty based although his patriotism was of a more chastened variety and he felt the primary post-war task was one of moral and spiritual reconstruction."¹⁹

MacLeod had not been impressed by the face of religion that he had encountered in the Army. Compulsory Church parades seem to have done as much harm as good. In his war diaries MacLeod makes some derogatory comments about services he attended during the war, such as: "Rotten service and sermon" ... "a most dismal affair" ... "sermon about carnage-bunkum."²⁰

A similar view of Church parades was taken by Lewis Cameron. "In the Army, Church parade was compulsory but much of the benefit of the service was undone by the "spit and polish" associated with the inspection which took place before going to Church ... the inspection did not put men into a frame of mind conducive to worship."²¹

Another First World War veteran and prominent Scottish Churchman of the 20th century was the Rev Archie Craig M.C. who rarely spoke about his own combatant service with the Intelligence Corps. "Though his total experience of the War convinced him that it was impossible to be anything other than pacifist," writes the

¹⁹ R Ferguson, George MacLeod, (Edinburgh 1990), p.52,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.52.

²¹ Cameron, p.81.

biographer of Craig, “he never lost his sense of esteem for the essential virtues of the good soldier, and wished that the church would sometimes take more seriously its appellation of church ‘militant’ rather than church ‘ruminant’.”²² By 1919 the churches had even greater sins and weaknesses to address. The Assembly reports of the post-war period reveal a refreshing candour in acknowledging the weakness of the Church’s witness and the need to revise her methods of work.²³ But how far does confession go in correcting wrongs, especially as a far-reaching moral and spiritual reconstruction was what was probably needed?

As far back as the 1890's, the Church of Scotland had carried out an examination of “The Religious Condition of the People,” which had observed that in certain groups church attendance was low and that among the young there were rising counter-attractions such as football.²⁴ By the late 19th century the Church of Scotland was experiencing a crisis of confidence. According to W. Ferguson, “The intellectuality of its faith, once its great strength, was now a grievous weakness. The sanctity of the Sabbath and the habit of churchgoing remained; but undeniably religion was no longer the very pith and core of Scottish life...”²⁵ By the turn of the century membership was falling, while concern was also expressed by leaders of both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Churches over the drop in the number of babies being presented for Baptism.²⁶

The Great War did not bring a revival of national religion in Scotland. Despite their pre-war influence and confidence, the churches had largely failed to assert national leadership during the war or to preserve their independent prophetic voice.²⁷ Not only did the Church admit to failing to provide a lead, but the people voted with

²² E. Templeton, “God’s February” A life of Archie Craig 1888-1985 (London 1991), p.26.

²³ Fleming, p.100.

²⁴ Annesley, p.29.

²⁵ W Ferguson, Scotland 1689 to the Present, The Edinburgh History of Scotland, Vol. 4, (Edinburgh 1987), p.339.

²⁶ Report of the Home Mission Committee to The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1914, p.329.

²⁷ S.J. Brown, “A Solemn Purification by Fire” p.1ff.

their feet and the influence and authority of the Church amongst the ordinary people was seriously weakened. The waning authority of the Church was becoming clear during the Great War. Some veterans were critical of the standard and ability of their war-time chaplains. As a student of the period has observed: "A good minister at home did not necessarily make a good chaplain."²⁸ An article published in The Record in January 1916 noted that the great revival expected from the war had not appeared. Chaplains returning from the front were surprised at the calm acceptance of the present conditions among Church leaders at home, to the apparent indifference to the highest things.²⁹ Writing in the same issue of The Record, the Rev A.J. Tweedie observed that war "was heavily on the side of deterioration of human character." He took little comfort from, "the spasmodic pieties of the danger zone." "The conditions of war," he noted, "are not an evangelistic agency ..."³⁰

Nowhere is it more clearly presented that the Church was out of step with British soldiers than in the inquiry that led to the publication of The Army and Religion in 1919. This enquiry was begun in 1916 under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Winchester and funded by the YMCA. Its stated aim was "To discover, what was being revealed under war conditions as to the religious life of the nation, and to bring the results before the churches."³¹ The study examined a range of issues by means of a questionnaire that was widely circulated amongst chaplains. The results were then compiled and the report (which was not published until 1919) was written largely by Professor David Cairns of Aberdeen United Free Church College. After careful analysis of the great mass of information which the enquiry generated, Cairns's report merely confirmed the churches' own worst fears.

Broadly speaking, the enquiry examined three key areas. Firstly, what did the men think about religion, morality and society and what faiths and standards did they

²⁸ Annesley, pp.89ff.

²⁹ A. J. Tweedie, letter, The Record, January 1916, p.1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.7.

³¹ The Army and Religion, (London 1919), p.v.

live by? Secondly, what change, if any, had the war brought about in the moral and religious character of the men? Had the war made belief deeper or more difficult? As one observer noted: "The Soldier has got religion I am not sure that he has got Christianity." The third area was the relationship of the men to the churches. What kept many of them from going to Church? What did they think about the Church in general?

The enquiry revealed that "the great preponderance of volunteers were men who had no use for any of the churches, who were under an extraordinary misunderstanding as to what the Christian religion really is, who instead of faith in the Son of God had a dim notion that Jesus Christ was the best man who died long ago and to whom the very idea that He was alive today and able to help them in their hour of need, was a mere dream."³² The Army and Religion Enquiry concluded that servicemen in France had only the haziest, ill-informed and often wrong notions about the Christian faith and also a highly critical view of organised religion in Britain.

For many of the men, going to war meant leaving home for the first time and therefore leaving the normal peacetime constraints of family life. Peer pressure and a growing sense of masculine prowess led many a young man down roads of grave carnal danger. There was little respect among the troops for the moral teachings or authority of the Churches, which was reflected in widespread petty theft, profanity, gambling, drunkenness and prostitution. The mood of "trench fatalism" increased the understandable human need to live life to the full before it was too late. Yet the clear evidence from the men at the front remained that "some eighty percent of them stand in little or no living relation to organised Christianity, and that behind their indifference to it there is a strong and rising tide of feeling that religion, as it is presented to them in the Christian Church, is out of touch with reality and with the real business of life."³³

The highest values among the troops were seen in what soldiers today call the "buddy buddy system." "The religion of the Armies," notes J. Baillie, "in fact, was a

³² Ibid., p.xxviii.

³³ J Baillie, The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul. (New York 1926), reprinted (London 1936), p.25.

religion of deeds and of loyalties rather than clearly formulated beliefs.”³⁴ You look after my back and I will look after yours! A man would risk his own life and freedom, just to find a wounded or dead colleague on the battle field and to bring him first aid or a decent burial. There are countless examples from both World Wars of chaplains and soldiers going out to bury the dead while still under enemy fire. (There is an excellent and moving poem on this very subject by Woodbine Willie entitled His Mate.) John White’s batman from World War One records “that if a man was killed in the line and the body could not be brought down, he [White] went up the line to give it a decent Christian burial ... even in heavy shelling he gave a full service.”³⁵

At home in Scotland the Church also failed to appeal to the needs of the people. Living conditions for the average person had improved during the war, as the conflict brought with it full employment, better levels of wages and reduced destitution. New social problems, however, emerged due to “profligacy, war-time racketeering, blind-alley employment and sexual immorality.”³⁶ At the same time it was perhaps inevitable that the war would result in falling congregational rolls with the reduction of children attending Sunday school, men away on military service and women now working to support the war effort. It became increasingly difficult to determine accurately the true level of church-going. One indicator of Church attendance may be seen in the Communion and Baptismal statistics of the war years.

The Communicants on the roll of the Church, as at the close of 1918, numbered 722,750 an increase of 504 during the year. The number reported as having communicated at least once is 455,224 a decrease of 8721 as compared with the number in 1917, when 10,316 fewer than in 1916 were reported: in other words, the members who actually communicated at least once during the past year (1918) were 19,037 fewer than two years ago ... this is mainly attributable to the war.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid., p.23.

³⁵ Muir, p.178.

³⁶ D.J. Withrington. “Non-church-going, church organisation and “crisis in the church” c.1880 - c1920”, Scottish Church History Society Records, Vol. 24. 1987-92, p.219.

³⁷ Report by the Committee on the Statistics of the Church to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 1919, pp.823ff.

Another statistic that worried the Church commissioners was the fall in baptisms. The number of baptisms reported for 1918 was 24,879, which was 1505 fewer than in 1917.

The example of the Church of England's National Mission of Repentance and Hope launched in early 1916 may have prompted the Presbytery of Aberdeen to petition the General Assembly of 1916 for a National Mission in every Scottish parish in the late autumn or early winter of that year. It was late in 1918 before any real preparations for the mission were made and the mission was eventually held in early 1919. Peace promised to bring new hope to the Church. The aim of the mission was to "revive and regenerate Scotland and the extension of the Kingdom of God throughout the world." The Mission organisers sought: "Under God to make Scotland a Christian Country in fact as well as in name".³⁸ Some in the Church still believed passionately that they had a message to proclaim and that the Gospel had to be preached. In his closing address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on 29 May 1919, the Moderator, Professor W P Paterson, asserted that "the ordeal of the War had awakened the Church to her responsibilities to the entire nation."³⁹ The Church authorities accepted that the War had indeed shown a discrepancy between faith and practice. Yet this admission proved little and had minimal effect. Few if any of the recommendations of the 1919 Army and Religion Inquiry were followed through or even discussed after the ink on the Report's pages had dried. It is no wonder that George MacLeod and others appealed for some decisive action and for moral and spiritual reconstruction in post-War Scotland.

These calls for the new Christian social order, however, fell upon deaf ears and produced little interest amongst war-weary Scots. The National Mission of Re-dedication aroused scant enthusiasm in the pews. "The Mission," the prominent Scottish minister John White remarked, "revealed the inadequate spirituality of the

³⁸ Annesley, pp.146-150.

³⁹ W.P. Paterson, *Recent History and the Call to Brotherhood*: address delivered at the close of the General Assembly, May 29, 1919, Edinburgh 1919, p.32.

Church.”⁴⁰ They were much more concerned about rebuilding their own lives than paying lasting respect to their war dead. Stewart Brown has observed that “an estimated 110,000 young Scots were killed, a higher proportion than in any other country in the Empire, and tens of thousands more were incapacitated by wounds or shattered psychologically.”⁴¹ To these victims the Church had seemingly little to say. “The horrors and miseries of the First World War,” wrote the Church historian A.C. Cheyne, “further accelerated the advances towards a completely secularized society, which led to an awakening in the churches to the gravity of the situation and their failure to deal with it adequately”.⁴²

II

THE INTER-WAR CHURCH

During the early 1920's the appeal for social reconstruction was heard less frequently in the two main Presbyterian Churches in the land, and in some ways the Churches failed to provide leadership for its people in the difficult post-war years. As A.C. Cheyne observed, “a new world had come into existence, a world which, (among other things) seemed much less favorable to Christianity and the Christian Church than its predecessor had been.”⁴³ Scotland was to witness no revival of national religion either during or post World War One, much to its own loss and shame. “The Scotland of the early 1920's,” argued Stewart Brown, was far from the Christian Commonwealth which Presbyterian ministers and elders had envisaged at the General Assemblies of 1919.”⁴⁴ Commenting upon the similar situation in England, the historian Alan Wilkinson wrote:

⁴⁰ Muir, pp.185f.

⁴¹ S.J. Brown “A Victory for God”: The Scottish Presbyterian Churches and the General Strike of 1926. In The Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol. 42, No. 4, Oct 1991, p.596.

⁴² A. C. Cheyne, The Transforming of the Kirk, (Edinburgh 1983), p.178.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.177.

⁴⁴ S J Brown, “A Victory for God...”, p.600.

It would be a gross over-simplification to ascribe the decline of institutional religion to World War One. It had already begun to ebb in the Edwardian period. But the War did powerfully accelerate and intensify pluralism, secularism and the belief in modernity, which have proved to be most potent solvents of allegiance to institutional religion fewer people found it possible to express their faith and experience through what the church provided.⁴⁵

The legacy of non-church-going was something which taxed the attentions of the Established Church in Scotland for the four decades prior to 1920. Clearly the Church had social, economic and organisational problems which hindered rather than aided Church membership. As early as 1896 the Church Commission had felt the “extent of religious indifference and non church-going”,⁴⁶ to be seriously alarming. Attempts would have to be made to defend the position of the Church in national life. But the problem of lapsed membership and that of habitual non-churchgoers was a source of great concern to all the Churches, not just the Church of Scotland. Reports by the Church Commissioners regularly emphasised “the vast amount of spiritual inertia”⁴⁷ they found in the parishes they visited.

In 1893 the Rev Dr Robert Howie had published a statistical study entitled The Churches and the Churchless in Scotland; Facts and Figures, in which he asserted that all denominations were suffering what he called “retrograding” both in attendance and in membership.⁴⁸ He also found that the wealthier suburbs were over-churched while the poorer working class areas received insufficient attention. He therefore advocated a more aggressive missionary approach by the Churches to reach and “compel” the churchless to come in. Howie was critical of the Churches’ inefficiency. He produced evidence that clearly revealed the Churches to be defective in their wider Christian vision.

⁴⁵ A Wilkinson, Dissent or Conform?, (London 1986), p.55.

⁴⁶ Withrington, p.200.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.207.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.213.

During the early decades of the twentieth century the Church authorities looked actively for ways to encourage people to participate in Church life. They were certain that the Church could inspire moves which would bring back the young and the poor “into the moralizing and saving grace of religion.”⁴⁹ The Churches somehow had to prove that they were worth supporting. The personality, the energy and the commitment of the parish minister were seen to be crucial in stemming the tide of irreligion.

A statistical analysis of the census returns of 1921 revealed that the number of non-churchgoing adults in Scotland in 1921 was 1,067,656 or 36% of the adult population. By 1926 the number of non churchgoing adults had increased by c.40,000 although there had also been a considerable increase in the overall adult population.⁵⁰ On holiday in Aberdeen in 1922 Lewis Cameron and his wife went to Holborn United Free Church for the evening service; there were about forty worshippers in the Church which sat about 1000 . As the minister rose he looked around the empty pews and throwing his manuscript aside he electrified his hearers with the challenging questions: “Why are all these pews empty? ... Why are our divinity halls empty?”⁵¹

In May 1919 the Church of Scotland Report of the Committee on Privileges for Divinity Students engaged in War Service stated that “twenty-six students of divinity have now given their lives for their King and Country, a testimony almost in itself that our divinity halls have not failed to produce a fine type of manhood full of patriotic self-sacrifice.”⁵² In 1917 the Assembly passed Act VIII on the modified “Course of Study for Students Engaged in War Service.”⁵³ This course was open to full time students of divinity who had served with the forces for at least one year. Act VIII was devised to enable ex-servicemen to enter the divinity halls and to complete their studies

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.200.

⁵⁰ Appendix G. to J R Fleming The Church of Scotland 1875-1929 (Edinburgh 1933), p.317.

⁵¹ Cameron, p.72.

⁵² Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, (Hereafter called “Reports”), 1919, p.752.

⁵³ Reports, 1917, p.10ff.

in two years as opposed to three, as well as exempting them from sitting the entrance examination.

Originally there were too few ex-servicemen who availed themselves of this new way to enroll into the theological facilities. At St. Andrews there were only three registered students of divinity; at Glasgow thirty two; Aberdeen eight and Edinburgh three. In the second term there were fresh enrollments to the Scottish divinity halls, with four at St. Andrews and ten signing on at Edinburgh. In addition thirty students from the American Army had arranged to attend classes in Edinburgh.⁵⁴ In the academic year 1918-1919 there were sixty British students of divinity fully enrolled in the Scottish Theological Faculties.

The Rev John White (1857-1951) had been a war time chaplain in France with the 5th Battalion The Cameronians 1915-16 and was to serve for forty years as minister of the Barony Church of Glasgow. One of the brightest stars in the Scottish Church firmament in the inter-war period, he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly in 1925 and again in 1929. White was depressed by the inadequacy and the spiritual depression of the post-war Church. He was sensitive to the pervasive social misery and sympathized with working class aspirations for improved conditions, but he opposed what he viewed as the materialism and the class envy of the labour movement. He was, however, well placed to play a leading role in the industrial crisis of 1926 and especially in his dealing with the coal miners.

Writing about the hardship of growing up in Scotland in the 1920s, Fraser McLuskey, in his book, The Cloud and the Fire, comments, “even the most astute would have found conditions in Scotland in the 20’s hard to overcome. The coal strike which preceded the General Strike of 1926 inflicted a blow ... from which some small businesses never subsequently recovered.”⁵⁵ McLuskey was later to have a highly distinguished career as an Army chaplain during World War Two prior to becoming minister of St. Columba’s, Pont Street, London. In the 1920s he knew only too well

⁵⁴ Enrolment figures are found in the Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1919, p.526.

⁵⁵ J.F. McLuskey, The Cloud and the Fire, (Edinburgh 1993), p.5.

how difficult times were as he witnessed his father struggle to keep a small city laundry open in Aberdeen.

Despite the efforts of John White and others, the Church achieved little during the economic crisis of the 1920's. As Brown has argued, "the Church focused on the evils of the General Strike, while at the same time arguing that the Church was not competent to discuss the issues of economic deprivation and inequality that lay behind it."⁵⁶ During the Great War the Presbyterian Churches had pledged themselves to work for the Kingdom of God in Scotland, while the professed aim of the Church Union Movement was to restore the spiritual and moral authority of the National Church. White was keen to keep all channels of communication open with the miners. Yet during the General Strike the Churches had done very little. The Churches' post-war commitment to social reconstruction was now in pieces. The only hope remaining was that a United Church would reassert Presbyterian national leadership and build a Christian Commonwealth in Scotland.

From 1908 public opinion amongst the Church going Presbyterian population of Scotland had been clearly in favour of closer co-operation between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church. By 1909 both Assemblies had appointed large and influential committees to enter into negotiations upon the current ecclesiastical situation in Scotland and to examine the main causes which still led to division in the Church. John White was chosen to be clerk of the Church of Scotland Committee. According to one historian of the Scottish Church, "his breadth of vision, clarity of mind and indomitable will is due the ultimate success of this venture of faith."⁵⁷

Prior to the outbreak of the 1914-18 War, White worked hard to break down barriers of suspicion and mutual mistrust between the representatives of both churches. It was clear that closer links would have to be made if the religious needs of the Scottish people were to be adequately met. In 1911 White had brought a bold and innovative report to the Assembly proposing an approach be made to parliament to

⁵⁶ S.J. Brown, "A Victory for God...", p.604.

⁵⁷ J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland, (Edinburgh 1983), p.400.

rescind certain legal constraints upon the Church's spiritual independence and to pass a Declaratory Act recognizing that the powers she claimed in matters spiritual were inherent to the Christian Church. The Assembly received this report and encouraged White and his committee to continue their work. By 1913 the committee was in a position to produce a draft outline for new legislation to be brought before parliament and draft articles were prepared for submission to the Assembly of 1914. Eventually, a number of submissions were sent down to presbyteries for consideration, but before any serious consideration could be given to these matters war had broken out.

White tried to revive interest in union during the war but this was not easy. A meeting which he called on 12 April 1917 could muster only one fifth of his committee. In March 1918 however a more complete committee met and discussions were resumed. Here White was forced to defend his position against calls for a redrafting of the Union Articles and a call for greater safeguards to prevent the Church from possibly undermining her Presbyterian identity. There had even been a call at the Assembly of 1918 for the whole committee to be disbanded and a new one formed. According to White's biographer, "never a month passed without squalls blowing up from some quarter."⁵⁸ But White was well able to deal with the best of his critics.

The War had made church union seem more desirable than ever, and when in 1919 the articles as completed were sent down to presbyteries for approval or rejection they received almost unanimous approval. For White, "the end of the 1914-18 War brought a great lightening of the spirit. It now seemed that a union of the two great Presbyterian bodies would be possible."⁵⁹ His over-riding concern in the mid-1920's was not the social crisis; rather, it was to complete the unification of the Presbyterian Churches. As White frequently pointed out, the soldier dying on the battlefield, "did not stop to ask the denomination of the Padre who administered to them the last Sacrament."⁶⁰ Union was not a task to be delayed.

⁵⁸ Muir, p.196.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.196.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.190.

One hurdle which the Church faced in 1920-21 was to arrange for a bill to be passed in the House of Commons that would facilitate Church Union in Scotland. This was necessary to maintain the constitutional rights of the Established Church in the event of a successful union agreement. On 22 June 1921 the bill received its second reading. After a lengthy debate by M.P.s from both sides of the house, eventually the bill was passed without a division. The Churches were one more crucial step closer to Union reality. The passing of the Church of Scotland Act 1921, protected the spiritual freedom of the Church from Civil jurisdiction. This constitutional right was tested in the High Court in Edinburgh in 1995 and the case upheld in favour of the Church.

Despite the Church of Scotland securing its spiritual freedom by Parliamentary statute the steps towards union were hard fought. Careful negotiations were required in order to build a future United Church on a sure legal and financial foundation. White, however, was not without his opponents. A loose confederation of United Free Church ministers led by the Rev James Barr established an unofficial United Free Church association that had the intention of wrecking the union.⁶¹

Many hoped that 1925, the year in which John White was first elected Moderator, would be one of the most important years in the history of the Union movement. It was a year in which further essential legislation would be passed and careful negotiations entered to facilitate the Union. At all times White tried to keep his eyes upon that guiding rule of St. Augustine: "In essentials unity, in unessentials liberty and in all things charity."⁶²

By 1927 the "Basis and Plan of Union" had been discussed and accepted by the General Assembly and sent down to Presbyteries. As the Union movement reached its climax, White was given a sabbatical from his parish responsibilities in order to allow him to see the process through to a satisfactory conclusion. Even at this advanced stage, however, difficulties arose and there was a very real danger of a split in the U.F. Church camp.

⁶¹ See Muir, pp.235ff.

⁶² Muir, p.253.

For eighteen months the subordinate courts of both Churches considered the “Basis and Plan for Union.” Eventually in May 1929 the plan was approved and it was sent down to the Presbyteries for their approval under the terms of the Barrier Act⁶³. It was agreed that both Assemblies be adjourned until October when the final act of Union would be sealed. John White was duly nominated and elected as the sole Moderator of the Union Assembly of the United Church.⁶⁴

On 2 October 1929 Scottish civic, legal and Church leaders joined with the Duke and Duchess of York to witness the signing of the Act of Union between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Churches. In his opening address the new Moderator made the following remarks: “The first task that faces us is that which was the main motive in the reunion movement - the moral, social and religious well-being of the people of Scotland. The churchless millions is the first challenge to the United Church ...”⁶⁵

The Church of Scotland began its post-union life with a campaign for the development of a Christian Commonwealth in Scotland. The campaign, called the “Forward Movement,” was launched in Glasgow during the last week in October 1931. Some 2500 delegates attended a week of lectures, debates and discussions led by such Church leaders as John White and George MacLeod, who set out with a remit from the General Assembly of May 1930 to define the mission of the restored national Church.

A hard hitting book entitled The Call of the Church was published to coincide with the ‘Forward Movement Campaign’. It was written as a measured account of where the Church stood and what resources it had at its disposal. MacLeod advanced the thesis that a price would have to be paid financially if reconstruction was to be

⁶³ The 1697 Assembly brought into being The Barrier Act, to prevent any sudden alteration or innovation to the Presbyterian form of doctrine, worship, discipline or government. See “Barrier Act,” Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, 1993.

⁶⁴ For a more detailed account of the union of the Churches in Scotland see A. Muir, Chapters XII to XV, pp. 191-267.

⁶⁵ Muir, p.266.

complete. In regard to social reconstruction he stated: "I believe that if the Church is really going to go forward in the next 10 years it has got to be prepared at least for a crucifixion in the area of economics."⁶⁶ The cost of reconstruction would be considerable.

Later, when addressing the problem of Sunday observance, MacLeod asked a pertinent question: "How many of the churchless millions were misunderstanding the church because they thought it was an organization perpetually concerned with its "own" life?"⁶⁷ There was great concern that the Church was too inward-looking; too much concerned with its own self-preservation and self-interest. The Forward Congress was not slow to point the finger of blame at the Church itself. No one believed that reconstruction would be easy or smooth. John White warned the delegates to prepare for a "stiff fight". The battle he said, "would not be won if they betook themselves to trench warfare, to dig themselves in where they were and as they were. They must move forward..."⁶⁸

The way forward for the Church was to be seen in the development of a close-knit parish structure where every congregation and every Church member worked together for the good of the parish. It was a vision similar to that of Thomas Chalmers in the 1830's. The leaders of the 'Forward Movement' believed that a solid and active parish Church would provide a focus for all the people, not just those who darkened the Church doors on a weekly basis. In addition they saw this as a way of countering some of the great social and personal evils of the day, most notably intemperance, gambling and sexual immorality. Over a decade earlier, in 1919, White had written in these terms: "Among the social problems which demand the attention of the Church there is at the present moment none more urgent than that of sexual immorality. In the first quarter of 1919, 9.2% or roughly 1:10 of the children born in Scotland were born out of wedlock.... The Church is doing nothing to grapple with this. What are our

⁶⁶ G. MacLeod, letter to the editor, Glasgow Herald, 28 Oct 1931.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ John White Papers, New College, Edinburgh, Box WHI 6.7.

Sunday Schools and bible classes doing in countries where every fifth girl they turn out goes and fornicates in a hedgerow or stockyard?”⁶⁹ Ten years later the task before the Church was equally challenging, for while the 1919 figures were depressing, worse was to come. Despite the careful planning, investment of money and mission activity, the ‘Forward Movement’ proved a disappointment. The population at large was too concerned with the effects of the world economic depression to be much interested. Economic crisis and the general election in October 1931 meant that the congress was largely ignored. The delegates went home to their parishes. For the next two years some tried to keep the mission ideal alive but to little effect. White was not too surprised at this set back for the National Church. For he maintained that “religious revival would come only with a national social and economic revival, and the Church must not attempt to separate itself from the general material and cultural well being of the nation.”⁷⁰

The third decade of the twentieth century was to see the Church of Scotland embark upon a fairly successful Church Extension campaign, while at the same time swimming against the waves of racism, nationalism, sectarianism and paganism. The problem of home mission was considerable. In the aftermath of the Great War both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Churches were concerned about their inability to provide adequate religious observance and a Christian presence in the new housing schemes that were developing at a pace. Between 1918 and 1935, nearly a third of the Scottish people were rehoused in what White described as “the greatest social revolution in Scotland’s history.”⁷¹

In 1932 White, as Convener of the Home Mission Committee, laid before the General Assembly a plan to speed up the building of churches in the new housing areas. The result was the establishment of a national campaign for Church Extension

⁶⁹ John White Papers, New College, Edinburgh, Box WHI 6.7.

⁷⁰ Glasgow Herald 10,12 and 15 Sep 1930. Cited by Brown in “The Social Ideal of the Church of Scotland during the 1930’s”.

⁷¹ See S.J. Brown, “The Social Ideal of the Church of Scotland during the 1930’s”, p.19.

in Scotland. The campaign would collect funds and co-ordinate the building of churches and church halls, especially in the new housing developments on the periphery of the larger towns and cities. Much of the money for the “National Church Extension Fund” was donated secretly by wealthy industrialists like George Macfarlane.⁷² White nevertheless intended that every congregation should play its part in raising the necessary funds. Here was the national Church at work on a scheme for national Church extension.

In the 1830’s the first Church Extension scheme was designed to put churches in the cities that had grown up with the industrial revolution. A century later the plan was still to keep the Church where the people lived. The slogan “the Church in the Midst” signified the aim of restoring the Church to the centre of Scotland’s social life. “We dare not let the people grow up estranged from religion,” White warned. “For a state without a Church is not firmly established ... The national recognition of religion is the first principle of the Church of Scotland. It is our duty as the national Church to provide religious ordinances for all the citizens of this country.”⁷³

The initial success of the campaign surpassed all serious expectations. In the autumn of 1933, White proposed to raise one hundred and eighty thousand pounds for the fund. By December 1934, little more than a year after the scheme was launched, over half the money had been collected, despite widespread economic hardship and depression. The full amount was raised before the end of 1936.

In 1935 the government of the day passed a further housing act for Scotland, which promised to move another million people. The Assembly of 1935 warmly applauded John White’s initiatives in home mission. In 1936, a new home mission appeal was made for Church Extension. It had now become evident that this was to be an important part of the ongoing work of the Church in the twentieth century.

The successful response to Church Extension by the congregations of the Church of Scotland in the 1930’s has to be set against a background of hard line

⁷² Muir, p.289.

⁷³ Ibid., p.291.

racism, nationalism, sectarianism and paganism. This was revealed most starkly in the Church of Scotland's campaign against Irish immigration and the Roman Catholic Church in general.

There was both steady and sustained growth of the Catholic population in Scotland from 1901-1951 as can be seen in the following table:

CHANGE IN DECENNIAL RATE OF GROWTH
IN CATHOLIC POPULATION⁷⁴

YEAR	PERCENTAGE INCREASE
1901	NIL
1911	15.0
1921	14.2
1931	13.0
1941	6.0
1951	6.2

Although Irish immigration into Scotland slowed dramatically after 1931 as a result of widespread economic depression, urban deprivation and the collapse of the old mutually supporting loyalties that had existed between the Scotch and the Irish in the inner city slum areas, nevertheless, as the above table illustrates, there was both a steady and sustained growth of the Catholic population in Scotland from 1901-1951.

As a result, Catholics increasingly became the victims of verbal and physical attacks by Protestant extremists. In February 1930, White led a campaign against Roman Catholicism and Irish immigration. He believed that the national Church should lead the way towards a Protestant and racially homogenous Christian commonwealth in Scotland. Ultra-Protestantism, manifesting itself in a dogmatic hostility to Roman Catholicism and its adherents, was to become a distinctive force in Scottish life in the

⁷⁴ James Darragh, "The Catholic Population of Scotland, 1878-1977," *The Innes Review* Vol. 29, (1978), p.22.

1930s. Religious tensions were seen in the social, recreational and cultural scene, but the thirties saw this religious extremism become a factor in Scottish political life with the emergence of the Scottish Protestant League in Glasgow and Protestant Action in Edinburgh.⁷⁵

Protestant Action speakers attacked Catholicism from soapboxes at the foot of the Mound in Edinburgh. At the height of its sectarian campaign the behaviour of many of its supporters was abominable. Catholic functions were attacked; priests were assaulted in the streets; and Catholic shop keepers threatened. From the 1920s onwards sectarianism made a radical impact on Scottish life. Probably the first clear sign that religious divisions were hardening came in 1923 when the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland endorsed a Report entitled "The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Scottish Nationality."⁷⁶ By 1931, the Church of Scotland, through the Church and Nation Committee, was formally calling upon Scottish employers to employ only native Scots. Also the General Assembly of that same year gave permission for the Church Interests Committee to organise a campaign against Catholicism. Not everyone joined in the Anti-Irish, Anti-Catholic campaign, but there was a large response to a questionnaire sent out to all ministers about Catholic disposition and activity within their parish boundaries.

This overtly racist campaign may have contributed to the muted response in the Church of Scotland to the emergence of the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany and the Nazi reorganisation of the German Protestant Church.⁷⁷ The reaction of the Church of Scotland to the developing situation on the continent and in the German Church in particular will be examined in part IV of this chapter.

By the mid 1930s there was yet another crisis of confidence both within and outside the Church. The call in 1929 to reach out to the "Churchless million",

⁷⁵ Tom Gallagher, "Protestant Extremism in Urban Scotland 1930-39: Its growth and Contraction," The Scottish Historical Review, Vol. LXIV, No.2. 178: Oct 1985, p.143-167.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.145.

⁷⁷ S.J. Brown, "The Social Ideal of the Church of Scotland in the 1930's", p.22.

appeared to have fallen on deaf ears. There had been no real progress in reclaiming the unchurched masses despite the early successful funding of Church Extension. On the contrary, Church membership had fallen and irreligion was on the increase. The Church Extension campaign had slowed virtually to a standstill by 1936. In 1937-38 the Home Mission Board sought to revive interest in the Christian commonwealth with a revival campaign entitled, "the Recall to Religion." Yet despite rallies in Glasgow and Edinburgh the revival movement aroused little enthusiasm amongst the people.

When the project for the Empire Exhibition of 1938 began to take shape John White saw this as an opportunity to interest people in the Church and to demonstrate that truly the Church could be in the midst. A Church was built on the exhibition site and services were held and well-attended every day. But generally speaking by the late 1930's the Church of Scotland had failed to capture the imagination of the people. Some ministers in Church Extension charges complained that they received little interest or support from the Church.

Furthermore, the Church of Scotland had failed during the 1930's to make its voice respected as the Christian and moral conscience of the nation. Although after 1936 the campaign against the Irish and the Catholic appeared to subside, it was clear by the end of the 1930's that a new Christian vision for Scotland was needed. The time had come for the national Church to become a broad Church. It had to open its doors and extend the hand of friendship to the whole people of Scotland. This change of tack would also require a change of leadership and also the new generation of ministers who would soon find themselves as Scottish chaplains of the Second World War.

III

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

We will now turn to the environment in which the future Scottish chaplains found themselves as students in the divinity halls of the inter-war years.

SCOTTISH DIVINITY FACULTY STUDENT ENROLMENTS 1919-29

TABLE A

YEAR	TOTAL DIVINITY ENROLMENTS
1919	60
1924 - 25	66
1925 - 26	69
1926 - 27	81
1927 - 28	95
1928 - 29	116

BREAKDOWN OF DIVINITY ENROLMENTS BY UNIVERSITY FOR THE YEAR 1929

TABLE B

ST ANDREWS	GLASGOW	ABERDEEN	EDINBURGH
17	55	14	30

TOTAL = 116.⁷⁸

Table A reveals a steady rise in the number of divinity students enrolled in the Scottish Universities in the decade after the Great War. By 1929 Glasgow appears to have had the largest faculty. In that year the Union of the Churches led to the uniting

⁷⁸ The statistics produced in tables A and B may be found in the Report of the Committee on Education for The Ministry to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 1929, pp.989ff.

of the Church of Scotland with the United Free Church Colleges at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Interest in the ordained ministry was gradually increasing in the post-war years. Regardless of any spiritual dimension, the Church was seen by some as a professional position and a way out of economic distress. As one Aberdeen student Fraser McLuskey, later confessed, “I nevertheless viewed the acquisition of the two degrees [M.A.; B.D.] principally as a passport to economic independence.”⁷⁹ Church of Scotland regulations then required that a first degree, usually in arts, be taken prior to entering the divinity hall for the three-year theology course. Even in the depression there were a number of bursaries and scholarships which students could apply for to fund their courses. Again McLuskey writes, “due to the benefaction of the Scottish industrialist, Andrew Carnegie, students could receive grants sufficient for the payment of part or all of their University fees. I qualified for the full amount throughout my six year course.”⁸⁰

In October 1933, at the age of 19 years, Murdo Ewen Macdonald, who would later be captured while serving as an Army chaplain during the Second World War and eventually became Professor of Practical Theology at Trinity College Glasgow, matriculated at the University of St. Andrews. At that time the total number of students at the university was less than five hundred. The pre-war University was dominated by its Principal who was regarded by some as a “Benevolent Despot.”⁸¹ Most of the students were Scottish but a high proportion came from English public schools.⁸² Macdonald specialized in moral philosophy in his undergraduate years but his energies were not exclusively confined to the purely academic:

I became heavily involved in extra-curricular activities. I feel convinced that this kind of involvement enhanced and enriched my education. During my first

⁷⁹ McLuskey, The Cloud and the Fire, p.20.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p.15.

⁸¹ Robert Craig, Taped interview, Falkland, 6 July 1994.

⁸² Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Padre Mac, The Man from Harris, (Stornoway 1993), p.41.

year I joined the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (I.V.F.). But later, recoiling against their theological conservatism and insipid social concern, I found myself gravitating towards the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.).⁸³

In the early 1930's St. Mary's College, the theological faculty of the University of St. Andrews, included several professors with international reputations.⁸⁴ The Professor of Old Testament was Alexander Honeyman, who was the youngest professor in the four Scottish theological colleges.⁸⁵ Professor James Houston Baxter was the Professor of Ecclesiastical History, while the Professor of Divinity was Edgar Primrose Dickie, who had a M.C. from the First War and was to become active in the Huts and Canteens organisation during the Second World War.

The first Professor of Practical Theology and Christian Ethics in St. Andrews was William Roxburgh Forrester. George S. Duncan, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, and Principal of St. Mary's College, had never been a parish minister, but during the Great War, as we have seen, he had been chaplain to Field Marshal Douglas Haig. It was most unusual in the early thirties for the theological colleges in Scotland to be staffed by anyone but ordained men. The Rev Donald Macpherson Baillie was Professor of Systematic Theology in Murdo Ewen Macdonald's time at St. Mary's College. Baillie was a theologian with an international reputation who had published amongst other things, Faith in God and its Christian Consummation, and the Christological classic, God was in Christ.

There was a strong connection in St. Andrews between the theological college and the University chapel. Morning prayers at 9 am in the chapel were conducted in turn by the six professors, assisted by the four town ministers. There was no University chaplain in those days. On a Sunday morning students would faithfully attend chapel and then in the evening attend a church of their own choice in the town.

⁸³ Ibid., p.48.

⁸⁴ Church of Scotland ordinands were trained by studying theology at the Universities of St Andrews; Aberdeen; Glasgow and Edinburgh.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.52.

D.M. Baillie was a great friend of the celebrated Swiss theologian Karl Barth. With the rise of Hitler, Barth was one of the first Churchmen to stand out against National Socialism, at a time when the German Church generally was silent. With Martin Niemoller and others he founded and led the Confessing Church movement which opposed the “German Christians” and their support for the ultra nationalist state. In 1934 the Confessing Church members adopted the now famous “Theological Declaration of Barmen,” (of which Barth was principal author), as their charter.

In the summer of 1935 Barth was dismissed from his theological chair in Bonn, a position which he had held since 1930, for refusing to swear an unconditional oath of allegiance to Hitler. Eventually banished from Germany, he was appointed to the chair of systematic theology in Basel. From here he continued to write and speak to a world-wide audience against the evils of the Nazi regime.

On one occasion after 1933 Barth was in St. Andrews on a lecture tour and stayed with Baillie. Karl Barth was keen to visit the student night-life of St. Andrews and Baillie picked Murdo Ewen Macdonald and another student to escort the great theologian on his visit. About this meeting from his student days, Macdonald recalled that, “Barth was both critical and fearful of the Nazi regime that was gaining momentum in Germany.”⁸⁶ “Theologically D.M. Baillie admired Karl Barth but did not go all the way with him”.⁸⁷ In Macdonald’s opinion, and perhaps as a result of this personal encounter, he remarked that, “Barth was both a man of principle as well as a man of courage.”⁸⁸

In 1928, at the age of seventeen, Hugh Douglas, later minister of St. Mary’s Dundee and Dean of the Chapel Royal in Scotland, went up to Glasgow University to read classics. About Douglas’ time at Glasgow, The Very Rev John McIntyre, formerly Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, has written:

⁸⁶ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

University social life was an even-keeled affair. There was little regular or heavy drinking, probably because students were not in those years, when the depression was biting, at all affluent. Drugs were unknown and tobacco, still considered to be a harmless indulgence and cheap in whatever form, was one of the few life's comforts. Hugh's [Douglas] perception of the sexual life of his contemporaries was that it was fairly restrained, extra-marital sex being much less common than today, and students not contemplating marriage until they felt themselves sufficiently secure financially to maintain a wife and family.⁸⁹

At Glasgow Hugh Douglas became a member of the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.), which was supported by two outstanding figures in the University, namely the Rev Archie Craig, the University chaplain, and Professor A. A. Bowman who held the Chair of Moral Philosophy, and spoke with no uncertain voice about the meaning of the faith and its implications for both the individual and the nation at large. Apart from developing his own faith Douglas also had his sense of social concern sharpened:

He was deeply shocked by what he encountered in Anderston, [an inner city parish in Glasgow], where he helped out at a boy's club. He was shocked by the vermin-infested insanitary hovels in which some of the boys lived, with single stair-head toilets for six families, and one cold water tap in the kitchen to serve the whole household for all purposes.⁹⁰

In 1932 Douglas received a First in classics and moved to Trinity College in Glasgow for his theological training and education.

The Student Representative Council of the University of Glasgow first proposed the idea of having a full-time preacher and pastor on the staff and eventually on 1 April 1930 the Rev Archie Craig was appointed as the first ever Chaplain of Glasgow University. His annual salary of six hundred pounds came out of an endowment from the industrial magnate Lord Maculae.⁹¹

Not long after taking up his new appointment Craig carried out a survey of a cross-section of university clubs and societies in an attempt to discover the students'

⁸⁹ John McIntyre, Hugh Douglas, One Man's Ministry, ed. Colin Forrester-Paton, (Edinburgh 1993), p.13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁹¹ See, E. Templeton, God's February.

main concerns. “What bothered them,” writes E.Thompson, “was a range of ethical questions, about war and peace, about business ethics, gambling, sex, and remedying the unattractiveness of the Church, all which Archie recognised as serious issues, and tackled with energy in his Sunday evening discussions.”⁹² Pastorally the first Glasgow University chaplain had plenty to do but on reflection the majority of his work was spent counselling students who had problems of a sexual nature. In 1936 the Principal of the University, Hector Hetherington, recognised Craig’s worth when he said that he regarded Craig’s job in the University as being the most difficult and the most worthwhile of all.

The Very Rev Andrew Herron (who later became Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1971 when he succeeded his former Glasgow University student friend, Hugh Douglas), had gone up to the University in 1931. Herron later recalled that he found himself in a totally different world:

It had not been so very long since Church Union had produced a combined faculty, with a wealth of both staff and accommodation. We had in effect two Professors for each subject ... what was important however was that all our teachers were Ministers of the Church and with one exception had spent varying periods in the active pursuit of the parish ministry. They were to that extend well qualified to direct their instruction towards the production of parish ministers ...⁹³

T.J.T. Nicol, whose words open this chapter, went up to Aberdeen University from Aberdeen Grammar School in 1935 and was still there when the Second World War broke out. He tried to enlist as soon as possible but was persuaded that he would be more use as an ordained minister than as a combatant officer. With what he describes as a ‘heavy heart’, he returned to University life as an unhappy and unwilling student. Rugby football was to be a compensation but, like Fraser McLuskey, Nicol sat the Divinity Bursary Competition and came out as the First Bursar. “The princely

⁹² Ibid., p.46.

⁹³ A. Herron, Minority Report, Confessions of an Unrepentant Non Conformist, (Edinburgh 1990), p.11.

sum of ninety pounds a year was my reward ... and as beer was six pence a pint, a good night out could be had for an affordable five shillings.”⁹⁴ Although Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in The Black Watch (The Royal Highland Regiment) in December 1940, Nicol was, on completion of his ministerial training, to rejoin the same regiment as their chaplain in 1942.

T.F. Torrance was a student of Arts and Divinity in Edinburgh from 1931-37. In 1936 he spent time in Jerusalem and Athens and then in 1937-38 he studied in Berlin, Marburg and Basle. Born in China to missionary parents he grew up in an evangelical yet ecumenical family. “My father was a Presbyterian and my mother an Anglican, which imparted to my thinking a deeply ingrained blend of conviction that has always remained.”⁹⁵

Of his student days Torrance recalled in his unpublished autobiography “that there were at that time several dozen missionary children at the University, most of whom were studying medicine. Not a few were active members of the Evangelistic Association as the Christian Union in Edinburgh was then called and of S.C.M. and the Student Christian Volunteer Movement.”⁹⁶ At that time there was no University chaplaincy in Edinburgh, so that anything in the way of a University mission was planned and run by Christian students supported by members of staff.

Something of the interests of Edinburgh University undergraduates and New College students in particular in the 1920’s and 30’s can be seen in the minute books of the University Missionary and Theological Societies. On 25 October 1920 the Rev D. Bruce Nicol, B.D., M.C., minister of St. Margaret’s Edinburgh and father of T.J.T. Nicol, was unanimously elected as Honorary President of The Edinburgh University Missionary Association. His Honorary Secretary was to be George MacLeod.

⁹⁴ T.J.T. Nicol, Ordinary Chaplain, p.7.

⁹⁵ T.F. Torrance, My Theological Development, an unpublished MSS autobiography, p.1. Torrance personal papers.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

At the November meeting in 1920 Bruce Nicol outlined six areas of work which he hoped, in the near future, would afford students an opportunity to get some practical work and training. The list included helping with the boys club or the men's club and home and charitable visitation including the homes of former prisoners. Also included was "pleading": seeking openings in city centre pulpits for students to plead the aims and cause of their association as well as teaching in the Sunday School.⁹⁷ It was very much the aim of the Missionary Association to give its members as much practical experience as possible. At the meeting of 29 October 1924, the following notice was read: "Any member who desired experience of visiting in a slum area should volunteer for work of this kind in Holywood Square".⁹⁸

The Edinburgh University Missionary Association and the New College Missionary Society amalgamated in 1929 to form the Edinburgh University New College Missionary Society. The annual report of the New College Missionary Society 1928-29 stated that the work of the society was twofold: "Firstly, work in the Pleasance District of Edinburgh involving the upkeep of various organisations and buildings. This required at least one thousand pounds per annum to maintain. Secondly, the Society would support a specific scheme in the Foreign Mission Field. The scheme for 1928-29 was to provide a launch for the New Hebrides Mission, in the southern Pacific Ocean."⁹⁹

Many students gained valuable experience and insight into the social and industrial problems which loomed large before the Church in the 1930's, by working part time in the Pleasance area of Edinburgh which then was one of the most densely populated areas in Great Britain. Each year a post-graduate student from New College was elected as Sub-Warden of the Settlement and he in turn would live and work full time in the Pleasance, co-ordinating a whole range of activities, meetings, helpers and fund raising.

⁹⁷ Edinburgh University Missionary Association Minute Book 1920-29. Minute: 25 Oct 1920 and 8 Nov 1920.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, Minute 29 Oct 1924.

⁹⁹ Minute Book of the New College Missionary Society. (1928-49).

George D. Monro was appointed Sub-Warden for 1931. In his retiring address on 28 April 1932, he stressed the need for greater interest and support from New College students for the work in the Pleasance. He commended the College for its traditional help in the district and the unique opportunity it afforded for social and religious work of a wide range.

In December 1933 the then Sub-Warden was once again haranguing his New College friends to be more diligent in their commitment to the work of the Settlement. For while he agreed that much was being achieved, he stressed that opportunities were being let slip by “lethargy and lukewarmness of spirit”¹⁰⁰.

IV

CONTINENTAL INFLUENCES, INCLUDING ANTI-SEMITISM

In the decade before the outbreak of the 1939-45 war, there was a distinctly muted response by the Church of Scotland to the ecclesiastical situation in Germany. Despite the close theological ties within the World Reformed Churches and the fact that many Scottish students, ministers and academics had studied in Germany and therefore had some first-hand experience of the situation, a veil of silence remained in place. Theological students discussed the Jewish situation in their colleges but Karl Barth, who was honoured with a D.D. from Glasgow in 1934 and a D.D. from St. Andrews in 1937, failed to instill a positive reaction from the Church of Scotland towards the stance being taken by the Confessing Church. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland chose instead to ignore the whole matter and indulge in “theoretical passivity.”¹⁰¹

The rise of Hitler to power in 1933 produced deliverances by the Commissions of the General Assemblies of both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church. But despite Commissioners debating the dangers of the situation, there was to be no subsequent follow up that year. It was not until Bishop George Bell of Chichester,

¹⁰⁰Ibid., Dec 1933.

¹⁰¹ D.Shaw, “The Kirk and the Hitler Regime”, Life and Work, (April 1983), pp.26-27.

who, under the influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, spoke out against German National Socialism on 10 May 1934, that an influential British Churchman stood out in support of the Confessing Church. The General Assembly of May 1934 ignored the whole matter.¹⁰²

From 1934 onwards the New College Missionary Society (N.C.M.S.) invited a number of outside speakers to come and address them on the situation in Germany and particularly that of the Jews. On Tuesday 27 November 1934 Sir Leon Levison addressed the society on "Hebrew Christians and Jews in the Modern World." A somewhat cryptic comment was made in the minutes of this meeting to the effect that no specific reference was made in this address to German Jews.¹⁰³

Again on 22 April 1937 about thirty members of the society met to hear Dr Hoffmann, World Jewish Secretary of the International Missionary Council, speak on the situation of "Jews in the World Today". He stressed that never before had anti-semitism been so world wide and made clear the gravity of the situation both in Europe and in America.¹⁰⁴

A further warning on the plight of the Jewish people was delivered to the members of the N.C.M.S. who heard Dr Salis Daiches, Chief Rabbi in Edinburgh, speak on the "World Situation of the Jews" on 3 February 1938. In this address he stated that "intolerance of Jews had grown during the economic depression and was increasing at the present moment".¹⁰⁵

One final meeting prior to the outbreak of war discussed the Jewish question. On 24 November 1938 the Rev R.F. Chisholm spoke on the topic, "The Church and the Jewish Problem." He claimed that the present wave of anti-semitism was but a continuation of the situation he had met thirteen years before when he had gone to Romania. The crux of the problem, as he saw it, was that, "The Jews are everywhere

¹⁰² Reports, 1934.

¹⁰³ New College Missionary Society Minute Book, 27 Nov 1934.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid; 22 Apr 1937.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid; 3 Feb 1938.

and anywhere but at home nowhere.”¹⁰⁶ What is unclear from the minutes is whether or not Chisholm’s address elicited much sympathy from the student body for the plight of the Jews.

It would appear however that while in the New College Missionary Society at least the plight of the Jews was at least under discussion, this was not borne out in action. T.F. Torrance later claimed that the Church of Scotland knew very little about the situation in Germany in general and about the Jews in particular.¹⁰⁷ Regardless of how much or how little the Church of Scotland membership knew about the German Church situation the only recognisable response in Church of Scotland circles was one of silence.

In the spring of 1935 Bonhoeffer came to Edinburgh to see John Baillie whom he knew from his student days at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Shaw suggests that the aim of this visit was to enlist Baillie’s help in stimulating the Church of Scotland to speak out against the developing situation in Germany. Yet again silence reigned.

In addition to the N.C.M.S., New College had a Theological Society at which a great range of topics as diverse as Sabbath Observance, the place of the Bible in a Theological Curriculum, and Christianity and War were debated. On 31 October 1935 T.F. Torrance proposed the motion that: “This house disapproves of the Oxford Group”¹⁰⁸ and “charged the group with unwholesome subjectivism and theological shallowness.” Few however were prepared to disapprove of it as a movement.¹⁰⁹

On 19 March 1937 the business of the evening at the Theological Society was an address of the Honorary President, Karl Barth. The subject of the address was “Forms of Theological Thinking.” Professor Barth, who spoke in German, although

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; 24 Nov 1938.

¹⁰⁷ T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 23 Feb 1994.

¹⁰⁸ The Oxford Group was founded by Frank Buchman who having attracted a following of undergraduates at both Cambridge and Oxford went to South Africa spreading a message which stressed the importance of international and social morale in place of the individual. It was from this group that the Moral Rearmament campaign for moral and spiritual regeneration was launched in 1938.

¹⁰⁹ New College Theological Society Minute Book, 31 Oct 1925.

translation was provided, dealt with the nature and object of theological thinking and with the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Word of God.¹¹⁰ What is not clear from this minute is whether or not Barth made any reference to the contemporary situation in Germany or whether or not time was allowed for questions.

It was also in March 1937 that Barth gave the first of his series of Gifford lectures in Aberdeen and made visits to Edinburgh and St. Andrews. The subject of these lectures was the Scots Confession of 1560 in which Barth drew out the confessions doctrine of resistance to ungodly political powers. In 1934 Barth had been the principal author of the Confessional Church's 'Barmen Declaration' a "prophetic theological statement demonstrating that the Christian faith was incompatible with Nazi ideology."¹¹¹ The tone of the Gifford lectures of 1937 stood in stark contrast to the passive if not reluctant voice of the courts and the majority of the ministers of the Church of Scotland in that day.

Since the Reformation in Scotland in 1560 there have been close links between the Reformed Churches in Scotland and those in mainland Europe. Reformers travelled freely and regularly sought refuge in England and in Scotland at times of persecution abroad. Likewise there is a long tradition of Scots travelling to Europe and most especially to study in the universities. There was no sharp decline in the number of Church of Scotland students attending German Universities during the 1930's. Many students from Scottish Divinity Colleges in the inter-war years were able to find funding for sabbaticals and holidays abroad and to France and Germany in particular.

R.L. Small, a future Moderator of the Church of Scotland, had been a student at the University of Berlin in 1929 when the name of Adolf Hitler was scarcely to be heard. Many years later he could look back with hindsight and see how Hitler was met with popular appeal:

¹¹⁰ Ibid; Minute, 19 Mar 1937.

¹¹¹ Shaw, p.26.

By 1933 Hitler had cashed in on the vacuum. Sixty per cent of my fellow [German] students knew that after they qualified that they had no chance of a job and all that they had to look forward to were their sports clubs. Hitler came into this vacuum and offered them some hope and some chance for a better future.¹¹²

J.K.S. Reid, later professor at Aderdeen, went up to Edinburgh University as a student in 1928. During the 1930's he travelled extensively in Germany, where he later admitted he had little contact with the Church. He was in Strasbourg when Czechoslovakia fell and German soldiers occupied Prague in the spring of 1939, and he recalls that "there was a great sense of fear in the air".¹¹³ In Basle, Reid met Karl Barth, who feared for the worst for Germany, believing that war was inevitable and that military action must be taken against Hitler. "There was a cloud, a heavy cloud of menace that was obviously on the horizon as war approached," Reid recalled.

There is evidence to suggest that Barth was better received in Scotland than in England. An article in the British Weekly of 7 May 1931 on the 'Significance of Karl Barth' comments: "Let it be said, first of all, that the Barthian theology has hardly penetrated into general church consciousness in England, and for the present remains largely a purely theological matter".¹¹⁴ Adolf Keeler in his book, Karl Barth and Christian Unity, (1933) remarked that "some Englishmen in the early 1930s saw Barthian theology as a 'storm over continental unbelief...', elsewhere continental theology easily appears to the more conservative Englishmen as too violently radical, too one sided and dangerous to the faith."¹¹⁵ The same cannot be said for Scotland where, according to Keller Barth, Brunner and Visser 'T Hooft have found the most friendly echo in Scotland'.¹¹⁶ Naturally a shared reformed theology with a strong Calvinistic base would encourage mutual attraction.

¹¹² R.L. Small, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Nov 1993.

¹¹³ J.K.S. Reid, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1993.

¹¹⁴ "Significance of Karl Barth," British Weekly, 7 May 1931.

¹¹⁵ A. Keller, Karl Barth and Christian Unity, The influence of the Barthian Movement upon the Churches of the World, (London 1933), p.160.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.174.

Yet there was not total acceptance of Barth in Scottish theological faculties. The Baillies, for example, were hostile to Barth. This hostility, Professor Torrance has argued, can be traced to what may be called their “philosophical reason”.¹¹⁷ John Baillie was sympathetic to much of the Barthian view but as far as his students were concerned, he felt he had to open their eyes to the fact that Barth’s view was not the only view.¹¹⁸ To disagree on philosophical or theological grounds however did not prevent Karl Barth from having many close friends in Scottish university and Church circles.

In 1938 J.F. McLuskey went to Germany on a scholarship from Edinburgh University to study both the German language and the German Confessional Church. He was sent to a seminary of the Confessing Church in Wuppertal, but when he arrived he discovered that the seminary had already been closed by the Gestapo. The students however continued to work in secret in the same way that they did for a time under Dietrich Bonhoeffer at Finkenwalde. Prior to going to Germany, McLuskey had been touched by the mood of pacifism. The months he spent in Nazi Germany as a student opened his eyes to the horror of the Nazi regime and left him in no doubt that it was a Christian duty to oppose it in any way possible.¹¹⁹ McLuskey met his first wife, Irene, while in Germany as a student and they married just before the war broke out. Irene Calaminus was the daughter of Pastor Herbert Calaminus, who was one of the distinguished group of reformed ministers of the Confessing Church who directed the affairs of the seminary at Wuppertal-Elberfeld. Pastor and Frau Calaminus, Irene’s parents, chose to stay in Germany during the War and both were killed in an air-raid on Wuppertal towards the end of the conflict.

In 1937-38 T.F. Torrance studied and travelled widely in mainland Europe. On 1 July 1937, he attempted to visit Martin Niemoller in Berlin-Dahlem, but that proved to be the day of Niemoller’s arrest. In Marburg, Torrance stayed with a family that had

¹¹⁷ T.F. Torrance, *My Theological Development*, Unpublished MSS, p.15.

¹¹⁸ J.F. McLuskey, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 15 Sept 1993.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

hosted generations of Scots, including H.R. Macintosh. Later in Basle he met with Karl Barth and others, who spoke at length about their current situation. On reflection Torrance recalled that “Barth saw the horror of Germany in a way that we (the British) did not. He believed that war [against Germany] was justified. It was a necessary evil. Barth saw through the problems. Barth believed from his own German experience that what he saw was ‘demonic’ and had to be destroyed.”¹²⁰

Hamish McIntosh went up to Glasgow University on the strength of the Carnegie Trust and the bursary competition. At Glasgow the student community was concerned over the increasing power and behaviour of Hitler and feared that war was coming. There was some awareness of the Jews and the growing persecution, but the influence of Karl Barth was less than that in Edinburgh; “We were not Barthian in Glasgow, we were more down to earth than those at Edinburgh.”¹²¹

It was in the mid-1930’s in Glasgow that Archie Craig was introduced to Barth. At first he seems to have been completely won over by the force of Barth’s evangelical affirmations, but his final theological diagnosis was that Barth was rather like Worcester Sauce, ‘a marvellous spicing of a jaded theological palate, but not the substance of a meal and inedible neat!’¹²²

James Matheson, who later became a member of the Church of Scotland from the Free Church, went up to Edinburgh in 1930. He was in time to enter the Free Church College where no Barthian theology at all was taught. Matheson had some difficulty persuading the Free Church authorities to allow him to take the University B.D. as they believed it to be “a hog’s wash of rationalism”. About his student days and the situation in Germany Matheson remarked: “We were aware that something very terrible was going on in Germany. We didn’t know about the Jews but we could

¹²⁰ T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 23 Feb 1994.

¹²¹ Hamish McIntosh, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 17 Mar 1994.

¹²² Templeton, p.48.

see that there was a ruthless power that was going to destroy all that we reckoned to be civilisation.”¹²³

V

THE PACIFIST MOVEMENT

As international tensions rose in the 1930's so did the spread of pacifism across the country. According to Adrian Hastings, when Japan invaded Manchuria on 18 September 1931, “pacifism spread for a while like wildfire, fed by the very fearsomeness of the world situation.”¹²⁴ In Scotland John White's appeals for the revival of the Christian commonwealth were met by a group of young ecumenically minded ministers, whose voice was first heard in connection with the pacifist movement in the Church.

Barely fifteen years had passed since the war that was to have ended all wars finished, when once again the storm clouds of international conflict darkened the sky. Fear of another war rose and people in the churches began asking: “What should be the Christian attitude to war?” At the General Assembly of 1933 the Rev J.W. Stevenson, minister of Coulter and a member of the Scottish Ministers' Peace Group, introduced a motion to the effect that Christians should never condone modern warfare with its technologies of mass destruction.¹²⁵ After a long and heated debate the pacifist issue was sent down to the Church and Nation Committee for consideration and for reporting back to the 1934 Assembly. Church and Nation considered the pacifist issue and reported in 1934 that while it deplored war in general, it acknowledged the possibility of a just war.

Needless to say the pacifist group were dissatisfied with the negative approach to pacifism put forward by the Church and Nation Committee. In response another

¹²³ James Matheson, Taped interview, Skye, 13 June 1994.

¹²⁴ Adrian Hastings, A History of English Christianity 1920-1985, (London 1986), p.331.

¹²⁵ S.J. Brown, “The Social ideal of the Church of Scotland during the 1930's,” p.24.

pacifist resolution was put before the Assembly of 1934 by Archie Craig, chaplain of Glasgow University, which sparked off a further emotional debate. White rose to counter this resolution with an impassioned speech accusing the pacifists of attempting to seize the moral high ground over and above those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the World War. White repeated that, as a last resort, it might be a people's duty to take part in a war in fulfillment of its own duty or to go to the help of a persecuted people.¹²⁶ White's speech was received with thunderous applause and in the division the pacifists received less than fifty votes in a crowded house. The majority opinion of the highest court in the Church was equally clear: "The General Assembly recognize that, in the event of war, conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit must decide the individual's action."¹²⁷

The pacifist debate, however, was far from finished. In Scotland, leading pacifist Churchmen like Archie Craig and George MacLeod continued to argue their case. The decision of the Assembly in favour of just war also fuelled a national debate. In August 1934, when a visiting American preacher in St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London commented on the Scottish Assembly's decision, his address resulted in a newspaper headline that stated: "In May the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland voted overwhelmingly for war".¹²⁸

White's attitude to war had not altered since the days when he had denounced the aggressors in 1914. He maintained "that Pacifism should be silent ... [for in war] ... we are fighting for the things that make life worth living, for everything that is symbolised by our hearths and our altars the spiritual values of life."¹²⁹

Archie Craig's pacifism was not Utopian. He had travelled widely in Europe in the 1930's and was well aware both of the German resentment at the Treaty of Versailles and of the sinister character of Hitler's rise to power.¹³⁰ It was not therefore

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.341.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.341.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp.341ff.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.343.

¹³⁰ Templeton, p.50.

naïveté about the state of Germany which made him endorse the pacifist cause, but the growing sense that in this context too, the Gospel challenged the Church to ‘the conspicuous gallantry of turning the other cheek to the assailant.’ In his 1937 Armistice Day sermon he began: “We are met as followers of Jesus Christ. We probably belong to different political parties; make different judgements on Franco; are pacifist and non-pacifist. But the division between believers and non-believers is deeper.”¹³¹

It is untrue to say that George MacLeod emerged from World War One a pacifist but his experiences of the First World War must have influenced him to some extent for it is true that by the early 1930’s he was preaching a carefully thought out pacifist message. In 1934, in an address to the Student Christian Movement at Swanwick, he argued that the Church needed to find a moral equivalent to war, even though he did not rule out the need for force in certain circumstances: “There are still ‘police’ duties to be performed by civilised countries ... but after experiencing in our own generation the holocaust entailed in wars between civilised peoples, it becomes the instant duty of Christian patriots to plead with their countrymen to explore new approaches altogether”¹³² MacLeod was taken with the idea of “patriotic pacifism”: “Turning the other cheek is a positive and not a negative act”. MacLeod’s move towards pacifism was itself part of a national reassessment of the First World War. Could the Church really support yet another war to end all wars?

George MacLeod was attracted to the life and thinking of two Church of England clerics, William Temple, The Archbishop of York, and Dick Sheppard, Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London. Sheppard formed a Peace Army which became in turn the Peace Pledge Union. Both Archie Craig and George MacLeod supported Sheppard and they, along with Garth MacGregor of Glasgow University, felt that nothing but pacifism properly expressed the Church’s commitment to take the way of the cross seriously.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.51.

¹³² Ferguson, p.129.

Over time MacLeod found his pacifism to be both a hindrance and a help. He was banned from broadcasting on the BBC in the early part of the Second World War because his pacifist views were regarded as unpatriotic. He also found that support and funding for the Iona Community¹³³ was not as forthcoming as might have been expected due to the pacifist wing's association with Iona. MacLeod eventually had to defend himself and his community in the Iona Community magazine, the Coracle:

If anything that is formed is to continue to be known as the Iona Community it cannot stand for anything essentially different to that for which it was formed. And the Community has always been broad based as regards applications of the Faith. It has already had within its membership men who were destined for the army both as soldiers and as Chaplains, and also pacifists which is a reflection of the actual situation in the Church today¹³⁴

In a letter to John White on 1 August 1940 MacLeod wrote: "As regards the Community through the years, the vast majority are not pacifists. More are serving in the forces than declared pacifists, the first Military Medal that came to Edinburgh came to an Iona Community man."¹³⁵ In another letter dated 18 April 1941 MacLeod observed to White:

Actually my pacifism ... is actuated by my terror lest the Church become indistinguishable from the state in the next quarter century; hurtling the more exuberantly spiritual into extra-ecclesiastical organisms of the baser sort ... the Church must be free to condemn, to challenge and to champion. I see the seed of that essential witness within the church being carried today by men who are pacifist and men who are not pacifist ... I am prepared to be numbered with long haired, sandalled oddities who are no more than modern Gnostics. I am not the blind idiot I may temporarily appear.¹³⁶

In the 1930's the debate about war and peace was a dominant issue in student politics and a focus in the Rectorial election campaigns in the Scottish universities.

¹³³George MacLeod founded a community on the island of Iona, a place renowned as a place of spirituality, community and mission. See Ferguson, George MacLeod, Part three.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.175.

¹³⁵ John White Papers, Box 20.5.

¹³⁶ John White Papers, Box 20.6.

Hamish McIntosh was a student in Glasgow in 1937 when Dick Sheppard, Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the conspicuous pacifist and founder of the Peace Pledge Union, was a prime candidate in the Rectorial election of that year:

In October 1937 George MacLeod, then Minister of Govan, made a tremendous speech in the men's union of Glasgow University and that speech made quite a number of us into out and out pacifists. I for one was influenced by him. I amongst others voted for and had Dick Sheppard elected as the only Pacifist Rector Glasgow University ever had. Sadly he died before his installation.¹³⁷

Yet as the war drew near there were signs that pacifist influence was waning. At St. Andrews in the mid 1930s Robert Craig was aware of the pacifist movement but, he argues, "the threat of Hitler and Fascism diminished pacifism. It was never all that strong. People had a clear cut alternative to resist Hitler by force of arms if necessary and address the treatment of the Jews. In the Second World War there was a humanitarian element which diminished the effect of pacifism."¹³⁸

David Whiteford was a student at Edinburgh in the immediate pre-war years:

Reports in the press or meeting refugees from the Continent at Church meetings made us aware of the situation in Germany. We also listened to the radio and read other articles in magazines and books. There was fear of another war. First World War experiences didn't seem very far away. There was apprehension in the adult world of another war We were living through a period of Peace Pledge Union and pacifist propaganda; MacLeod, G.H.C. Macgregor and Canon Raven and others led the campaign for pacifism. There was a tremendous surge of pacifist idealism that exercised considerable pressure on my generation. MacLeod and others produced an idealism that was some kind of answer against war. But as we watched Hitler, war seemed inevitable. By now pacifist leanings had been eroded by the processes of history that we were living through. MacLeod had a powerful influence on the student body. In 1940 MacLeod was Chief Missionary at the 'Challenge of the Faith' mission at Edinburgh University and MacLeod said little about his pacifism, instead he concentrated on presenting the Christian Faith which was his remit. The other Missionaries at this mission were Professor Forrester's

¹³⁷ Hamish McIntosh, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 17 Mar 1994.

¹³⁸ Robert Craig, Taped interview, Falkland, 6 July 1994.

wife and from the Anglican side Melvyn Stockwood who later became Bishop of Southwark.¹³⁹

By 1939 the Revd A.I. Dunlop had finished college in Glasgow and he was an assistant in Paisley the day war was declared. When asked in 1993 “what was the mood in the Church of Scotland in September 1939?” Dunlop replied:

Steady in the matter ... fearful ... and sure that the evil that existed in Europe had to be met in some way. There was comparatively little pacifist feeling although there were some very notable pacifists, including Professor Macgregor who everyone in college respected but didn't necessarily follow.¹⁴⁰

In 1936 T.F. Torrance was in Jerusalem with a group of 12 theological students from Scotland, most of whom were pacifist, but they found themselves caught up in the Arab Revolt:

The Grand Mufti Husseni had just come back to Jerusalem from visiting Hitler and was spreading around his poisonous anti-Jewish propaganda provoking an Arab revolt. The great bulk of the British troops were in Egypt but the situation became so dangerous that the High Commissioner gave permission for the Inspector General of Police to hurriedly recruit a force of Special Constables, not all British, but who would be armed with rifles to act with the police in guarding public places. About half of our group declined out of pacifist convictions, but the situation was so desperate that several of us felt we had to join up ... I was 49% pacifist but I couldn't stand back and watch things happen that were going to happen ... I decided then that if it came to War I would have to become a chaplain or something...¹⁴¹

When war did finally come Torrance was enlisted into the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation.

In preparation for war the Irish Presbyterian Church, a sister Church to the Church of Scotland, laid down the following mission statement:

¹³⁹ David Whiteford, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 29 Oct 1993.

¹⁴⁰ A.I. Dunlop, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 27 Oct 1993.

¹⁴¹ T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 23 Feb 1994.

If war breaks out, then pre-eminently the Church must manifestly be the Church, still united as the one Body of Christ, though the nations wherein it is planted fight each other, consciously offering the same prayers that God's name may be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His will be done, in both or all the warring nations. This fellowship of prayer must at all costs remain unbroken. The Church must also hold together in one spiritual fellowship those of its members who take different views concerning their duty as Christian Citizens in time of War.¹⁴²

Faced with the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the Church of Scotland was once again confronted with the challenge of total war, fought with weapons of mass destruction. An Army would be raised and the Church would be asked to find chaplains to minister to Scottish Soldiers at home and overseas.

CONCLUSION

During the inter-war years the Church of Scotland can be criticised for failing to provide clear moral and spiritual leadership for the people of Scotland. There was no discernible revival in religious observance and the men returning from the Great War were critical of their chaplains and of the Church at large. For many war-time conditions had broken the habit of church-going and increasingly the Church in Scotland lost its popular appeal. Britain as a whole suffered from a decline in interest in institutional religion.

The task before the Church was enormous and was made even more difficult by the social and economic conditions of the 1920's and 30's. But despite these problems the Church of Scotland was prepared to respond to its critics and to try, time and again, to address the underlying problems and to make the Church more accessible, accountable and relevant to the whole people of Scotland. Rarely did the Church of Scotland stand still in the inter-war period.

Veterans of World War One who took an active interest in Church affairs were quick to acknowledge the inadequacies of the national Church. George MacLeod and others called for decisive action to achieve moral and spiritual reconstruction in post-

¹⁴² Reports to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1938-41, p. 93.

war Scotland. John White believed that the Church of Scotland suffered from an inadequate level of spirituality and that there was a need for internal reform if the Church were to overcome the accusations of self-interest. The Scottish people were slow to recover from the heavy losses they had suffered during the Great War and the Church of Scotland was ill prepared to help.

During the economic and social problems of the 1920's White and others pushed forward with what the Church historian, J.H.S. Burleigh, called a "venture of faith," in an effort to create a secure legal and financial footing for the union between the Church of Scotland the United Free Church. By 1929 that Church union was achieved and the way lay open for the national Church to begin to challenge the inadequate moral, social and religious well being of the people of Scotland. Attempts to define a clear mission for the Church in the Forward Movement were however disappointing. Again, the early success in promoting Church Extension, to keep the "Church in the Midst", soon came to an end amid the economic slump of the 1930s. At a time when the Church of Scotland was dogged with sectarianism and racism it was hard to define a role for the national Church. The end result was that the Church of Scotland failed in the slump of the early 1930s to make itself heard as the Christian and moral conscience of the nation. By the end of the 1930s, however, a new vision was emerging. The Church of Scotland began to awaken to the need to become a broad Church. It began to grow more ecumenical in its outlook. It began to show the people of Scotland that the Church cared about them regardless of their social class, religious creed, and ethnic background.

The student records of the 1920s and 30s reveal an increasing awareness of social problems and an increasing social concern amongst the gradually increasing number of theological students. Equally Scottish Church students in the 1930s were increasingly aware of the political changes taking place in Germany. But despite travel and exchanges; despite the debates in the New College Missionary Society and in the Theological society on the plight of the Jews, pacifism and the developments in the German Church, and despite the visits to Scotland by both Barth and Bonhoeffer, the

Church of Scotland as a whole remained muted in its response to the German Church situation.

As international tensions arose in the 1930's so did the question of war and peace. The General Assemblies of 1933 and 1934 debated the pacifist question but decided that while war was deplorable there would always be a case for just war. The Church as a whole refused to believe that the cost of World War One could be counted as valueless. John White had reminded the Assembly that wars are sometimes fought for things that make life worth living.

On the basis of the topics recorded in the minutes of the New College Missionary Society and the Theological Society, the new generation of ministers who emerged from the theological facilities in the 1930s were more socially aware and better equipped to take the Church into the midst of the people. When the Second World War broke out, the Church of Scotland was moved to take an active role in any future conflict. There was a determination that the recrimination levelled at the churches after the Great War would not be repeated by the Church of Scotland in the next.

CHAPTER TWO

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

This chapter begins with a summary history, from a Scottish perspective, of the Chaplains' Department in the Army from the granting of a Royal Warrant in 1796. The Church of Scotland played a key role in establishing Presbyterianism within military chaplaincy. From the early 19th century the Scottish Church played an active role in the pastoral care of its members serving in the forces of the Crown at home and overseas. Initially the Church was concerned to ensure that there were sufficient Church of Scotland ministers serving to provide adequate cover for the Presbyterian population in the Army. Thereafter they were determined to ensure that the Church of Scotland chaplains were granted equal status with the clergy of the Church of England.

During the First World War more than half of all Church of Scotland ministers of military age served as either chaplains or combatants. Many more acted as Officiating Chaplains or in non-combatant roles. During the Great War there was never a shortage of volunteer chaplains from the Scottish Church, despite problems relating to the availability of commissions and the required length of service commitment.

After the war the Church of Scotland, and particularly the General Assembly's Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces (which had been established in 1860) played an important role in the formation of a unified Chaplains Department in the army in 1920. The first Deputy Chaplain General to be appointed after 1920 was a Church of Scotland minister.

The second half of this chapter will examine the role undertaken by the Church of Scotland in providing the Army with Presbyterian chaplains during the Second



World War. Again the Church of Scotland supplied a more than sufficient number of volunteers and at no time was it thought necessary to introduce conscription for chaplains.

From the Scottish perspective the General Assembly enabled the Chaplains Committee to work closely with Presbyteries to recruit chaplains and to ensure that divinity students were not exempt from military service. Not surprisingly, the 1939-45 War saw a steady decline in the number of students entering Scottish theological faculties and subsequently fewer men emerged qualified for probationary service. Pacifism also probably reduced the numbers volunteering for chaplaincy services, but as will be seen many Scottish ministers and assistants felt that they had a duty to volunteer.

Throughout both World Wars ministers and congregations constantly had to ask themselves where the ministers could best serve the Scottish people. The requirement to find chaplains to serve overseas had to be balanced against the need to serve the Church at home. By 1943 the reserve of chaplaincy volunteers was beginning to dry up in the Scottish Church and again the Chaplains Committee of the Church of Scotland appealed to Presbyteries and many new volunteers were forthcoming.

I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chaplains' Department in the Army did not receive official sanction until 23 September 1796, when the post of Regimental Chaplain was abolished and a regular corps of chaplains established. This decision was brought about not least because it was proving nearly impossible to recruit chaplains to serve with the troops abroad. The first Chaplain General to be officially appointed was the Rev John Gamble.

From ancient times, prophets and priests had been on hand to look after the spiritual needs of military men. According to Middleton Brumwell, as early as 430 AD, a certain Bishop, Germanus, led the army in a battle in Wales against Saxons and Picts.¹⁴³ Again, at the time of William the Conqueror there had been a tradition in some dioceses that the Bishop should train and lead his own men. In his book, The Army Chaplain, Middleton Brumwell argues that up to 1300 no war was embarked upon in Britain which did not have leading ecclesiastical figures in its midst.

It was in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) that the Latin word “Capellanus” was used to describe the chaplain as distinct from the local priest. It was also at this time that a division of chaplains into different “classes” first appears. A chaplain attached to a feudal Lord might be described as the “Capellanus Magnificus”, and received one shilling a day. Lesser chaplains were known as “Capellanus Vulgaris” and they received sixpence a day. (The practice of dividing chaplains into classes continues to this day. The different classes reflect both years of service and chaplaincy experience.)

Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army of 1645 employed chaplains on an official basis. In 1653 Cromwell granted a commission to a garrison chaplain and after the Restoration in 1660 chaplains were evident as Field Officers in almost every Regiment of the English Army. In the Articles of War of 1662-63, Parliament prescribed the duties of the chaplain: “He was to read the prayers of the Church of England every day and to preach as often as he thought fit. Every officer and soldier absent from prayers was to lose a day's pay.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³P. Middleton Brumwell, The Army Chaplain, (London 1943), p.9.

¹⁴⁴J Smyth, In This Sign Conquer, (London 1968), p.26.

In Scotland, after the Reformation of 1560, there is good evidence to suggest that ministers were recruited as Army chaplains. As early as 1578 the leaders of the Reformed Church accepted the responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the Army and this in turn created a precedent for the supply of such chaplains.¹⁴⁵

When the first Chaplain General assumed his appointment in 1796, he discovered that 340 chaplains in the ranks were apparently on leave and had appointed deputies to do their work. So universal was the dereliction of duty by the chaplains that a few years previously, in 1793, when the Army was sent to Flanders, there had been only one regimental chaplain with his corps. It is hardly surprising that the decision was soon made to abolish the system of regimental chaplains¹⁴⁶ and to form a more regular and responsible Department.

The aim of the Royal Warrant issued to the chaplains in 1796 was to provide the Army with clergy sufficiently well paid to enable them to minister to the forces on foreign service. The King hoped that “more effectual provision may be made for the regular performance of religious duties throughout our Army, without bringing any additional charge upon the public.”¹⁴⁷ It was further decided that the number of chaplains to be commissioned should be directly proportional to the number of troops in each military formation.

The Chaplains' Department Royal Warrant of 1796 also instructed Commanding Officers with regiments stationed in barracks to employ the services of the local clergyman to perform “divine service to the men”. This established the first

¹⁴⁵Dow, p.41.

¹⁴⁶From the time of Queen Elizabeth the status of the chaplain becomes more stabilised. In Standing Orders of 1621, definite mention is made of regimental chaplains. Prior to 1796 regiments recruited and paid for their own chaplains. This ad hoc system was far from satisfactory and almost unworkable when it came to service overseas.

¹⁴⁷Dow, p.252.

category of Officiating Chaplains to the Forces or OCF's. Further, provision was made for the appointment of a Chaplain General of the Army. He was to be responsible for running the Department and would be answerable to the Secretary of State for War.

Qualifications laid down in 1796 for the appointment of chaplains were as follows: "Zeal in his profession and good sense; gentle manners; a distinctive and impressive manner of reading Divine Service; a firm constitution of body as well as of mind."¹⁴⁸ The aim was to recruit men of good quality, committed and fit who would serve with the military at home and overseas. Initially the Chaplain General was successful in finding ministers for the home front, but was not so fortunate when it came to foreign service. By 1815 there were thirty-three chaplains in the Department, but with the end of the Napoleonic Wars this was followed by a gradual decline and by 1833 there were only eight commissioned chaplains with the Army.¹⁴⁹ So acute was the shortage of chaplains that in 1811 the War Office issued a directive that any officer, above the rank of Captain, could perform a chaplain's duties in the absence of a proper minister.

The outbreak of war in the Crimea, in 1854, found the Chaplains' Department reduced to some half dozen men, all of whom were clergy of the Church of England and most of whom were too old for war service. Volunteers however were forthcoming and were accepted, giving a fine account of themselves in a "war which had so much more of death than of glory to offer."¹⁵⁰ Chaplains were received in the Crimea from several denominations and tribute was paid to them by Lord Palmerston, in the House of Commons on 11 April 1856:

¹⁴⁸Brumwell, p.14.

¹⁴⁹Dow, p.259.

¹⁵⁰AC Dow, Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland 1856-1945, unpublished thesis, p.7.

The Chaplains, whether of the Church of England, whether of the Presbyterian or of the Roman Catholic Churches, have vied with each other in the zealous performance of their duty, and the success which has attended their efforts has been attested by the invariable good conduct of the troops. These gentlemen spared no pain to carry on their good work, and shrank from no exposure to the dangers of the hospital or the field, while at the same time they displayed to the world the highest example of Christian charity.¹⁵¹

Twelve chaplains had died during this war. But recruits were forthcoming and by 1859 more than sixty chaplains held commissions.

As far as the Scottish Church was concerned, there was a drawback with the 1796 proposals. Only one chaplain per Brigade was appointed, and unless the Brigade was exclusively Scottish (which was unlikely) the appointed chaplain was invariably a minister of the Church of England. This problem was addressed by the General Assembly of 1806 when there was dismay expressed over the apparent prohibition of Presbyterian ministers becoming chaplains. A committee was set up to investigate the situation.

This committee made little progress and in 1812 the General Assembly set up a new Committee with a broader and more pressing remit. They were to:

Embrace every opportunity of stating the claims of the national Church to have it provided that the same portion of the Army chaplains should be Presbyterian clergymen, whose character should be fully certified by the Moderator of the General Assembly.¹⁵²

Both Middleton Brumwell and Smyth contend that Presbyterians finally won their battle for recognition of the established rights of the Church of Scotland in 1827, and from that date Presbyterians were recognised as a separate branch of the Army Chaplains' Department.¹⁵³ A.C. Dow however disputes these findings and believes that it was not until 1858 that Presbyterians were given full status and rights in the

¹⁵¹Dow, p.271.

¹⁵²Dow, p.262.

¹⁵³See Smyth, p.28 and Brumwell, p.14.

Chaplains Department.¹⁵⁴ The date of 1827 is preferred as by then the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland were taking an active interest in Army chaplaincy and working towards denominational recognition.

After the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 and a further period of discussion on the place of Roman Catholics in the armed forces, Roman Catholic chaplains were fully recognised in 1836. Then in 1862 a fourth group called “Other Protestants”, mostly Wesleyans, were admitted. The first Jewish chaplain to the Forces was recognised in 1892.

By 1860 the General Assembly became aware of the need for a permanent committee to look after the interests of Presbyterians serving in both the Army and the Navy. Accordingly, the General Assembly of May 1860 “cordially recognised the importance of attending to the provision for the spiritual interests of Soldiers and Sailors, and maintaining correspondence with the Army chaplains, and appoint a small committee for this purpose.”¹⁵⁵ Since 1860 the Chaplains’ Committee of the Church of Scotland has not only looked after the wider interests of the Presbyterian chaplains and their Churches’ members, but it has also defended the position of the national Church within the military in Scotland and abroad. (Today the Chaplains’ Committee has a remit from the General Assembly that empowers it to help recruit ministers of the Kirk as chaplains for all three services.)

From its inception the Chaplains’ Committee set to work in a robust manner. In May 1861 the Committee took up the case of a certain Mr. Milne: “a chaplain,” it was recorded, “returned on leave of absence from India, on account of his health, whose

¹⁵⁴Dow, p.15.

¹⁵⁵Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains, Minute Book Number One, New College Library, 21 May 1860, p.1.

pay had been suspended.”¹⁵⁶ On 4 June 1861 the Committee agreed to send a deputation to London to petition the Secretary for War on behalf of Mr. Milne, but also to raise the matters relating to the recruitment, payment, and tenure of Presbyterian chaplains in general. In essence this petition asked that “early and favourable consideration be given to take steps for the more secure and permanent provision of the Presbyterian chaplains in the British Army and for the increase of their number.”¹⁵⁷

Lord Herbert, Secretary for War, replied on 20 July 1861, indicating that he could not agree with the complaint of the General Assembly’s representatives. He insisted that it was a misconception that Presbyterian chaplains were on a different footing from that of other chaplains to the forces and that their appointments were of a more temporary nature. Herbert also categorically denied that Presbyterian chaplains were liable to be dismissed at pleasure. Lord Herbert went on to say that no distinction was made by Her Majesty's Government between chaplains of the Church of Scotland and those of the Church of England.

On the matter of recruitment of Presbyterian chaplains, Herbert argued that the number of Presbyterian chaplains in the Army was in proportion to the number of declared Presbyterian soldiers:

Of the 229,000 men composing the Army about 23,000 or one tenth of the whole force, are returned as Presbyterians, the remainder belonging either to the Church of England or to the Roman Catholic Church...At home the number of Presbyterian soldiers is at present in round numbers 5,000, or one twentieth of the whole force in Great Britain and Ireland...thus giving a total of twelve Presbyterian chaplains, a number which does not seem to me inadequate for the purposes of ministration to 5,000 men.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Ibid., Minute 29 May 1861.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., Minute 4 June 1861.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

In the 1860s many Presbyterian chaplains felt that their position was being undermined. The Church of Scotland Committee continued to argue that there were too few Presbyterian chaplains appointed and that those who held commissions were at a disadvantage when it came to promotion. The Committee was determined not to accept second place to the Church of England and to resist anything which could be construed as having an Anglican bias. The Committee, for example, remitted to the Assembly a letter from a Rev Mr Paton, chaplain to the 72nd Regiment, dated May 1862. The issue at stake was the compulsory attendance of Presbyterian chaplains and men at Episcopal Church services:

It appears that if at any station there be neither an Episcopalian chaplain nor a Roman Catholic priest, the adherents of these persuasions are, on church parade, allowed to 'fall out', even though there should be an officiating Presbyterian chaplain at the station; while, on the other hand, should there be no Presbyterian chaplain, the Presbyterian soldiers, as a matter of course, are marched to Episcopalian services....¹⁵⁹

Dissatisfaction with the Army system and the desire of the Church of Scotland to retain a say in the pastoral care of its members serving in the armed forces, led the Chaplains Committee on 5 October 1863 to take decisive action. The convener was instructed to investigate the possibility of investing the committee "with powers over Presbyterian chaplains, similar to those which Roman Catholic Bishops have over chaplains belonging to that communion."¹⁶⁰ By January 1864 the convener was in a position to report that the Committee "have been invested with full and independent power over Presbyterian chaplains in the Army." From this strengthened position the Committee prepared to challenge the Secretary of State for War on the status of its chaplains.

¹⁵⁹Report of the Army and Navy Committee to the General Assembly, May 1862.

The Committee wrote to the Secretary for War in the following terms:

As Officers holding Her Majesty's Commission in the Army the chaplains of the Church of Scotland are under the civil and military jurisdiction of the Secretary of State for War... but the Church's spiritual and ecclesiastical supervision of her chaplains cannot be transferred to any other authority. In whatever part of the world they may be stationed they continue spiritually and ecclesiastically under the government of their Church.¹⁶¹

The minute of the meeting in January 1864 goes on to say:

The jurisdiction of the Church over her chaplains is not inconsistent with but supplementary to the jurisdiction of the War Office and the Horse Guards and would certainly be exercised for the benefit of the service.

The General Assembly of May 1864 resolved to make the Moderator the ex officio joint convener of the Chaplains Committee; this was done to ensure a more direct channel between Church and Government.

On 22 July 1864 Earl de Grey, then Secretary of State for War, asked a deputation from the Church of Scotland whether or not the Church would consent to have her chaplains being 'superintended' by the Chaplain General. This was an attempt by the War Office to regulate control over the chaplains of all denominations. On behalf of the Scottish delegation, the Moderator wrote to the Secretary of State for War on 10 August 1864 declaring "that the committee consider that the Presbyterian chaplains are entitled to entire freedom from the jurisdiction of a clergyman of another Church and that justice to them as well as to the Church of Scotland demands the formation of such an arrangement as has been made with the Roman Catholics..."¹⁶² Somewhat surprisingly, Earl de Grey responded to the Moderator's statement in a positive way, commending the Church of Scotland Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains on their zealous labours for the "spiritual good of the Presbyterian

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 5 Oct 1863.

¹⁶¹Army and Navy Chaplains Committee, Minute book one, p.114.

¹⁶²Ibid., p.132.

soldiers...” and agreeing that henceforth, “the Chaplain General will accordingly cease for the future to exercise any supervision over the Presbyterian chaplains of the Army.”¹⁶³ The impact of this decision was twofold. Firstly, Presbyterian chaplains now sent their monthly reports not to the Chaplain General but to the Under-Secretary of State. They had therefore a direct channel of communication open to their political masters. Secondly, the Scottish chaplains were answerable directly to the General Assembly. In May 1865, the Chaplains Committee reported to the General Assembly: “Commissioned Presbyterian Chaplains are now under the immediate supervision of the Secretary of State for War.” In time the independence of the Church of Scotland chaplaincy in the Army would have to be addressed, but this issue was not finally resolved until 1920 and the unification of the Chaplains’ Department.

By 1865 the Church of Scotland had established such a strong position in the Army that it was now in a position to assume responsibility for all Presbyterians in the Armed Forces. This time, however, opposition came not from the government but from Irish and English Presbyterian dissenters. Negotiations with the Presbyterian Church in England resulted in the decision on 14 June 1865 to change the name of the ‘Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on Army and Navy Chaplains’ to simply ‘The Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains.’ Further on 8 July 1868 Parliament passed the “Army Chaplains Act 1868”, which included an important clause protecting the interests of Church of Scotland chaplains both regular and OCF's. The Committee had won their battle for an independent voice and although time would erode these gains, the Church of Scotland had established for itself an important place in the order of precedence, next to that of the Church of England. (This is a position which has been jealously guarded ever since.)

¹⁶³Ibid., p.156.

Henceforth, the Chaplains' Committee of the Church of Scotland continued to recruit, administer and support Presbyterian chaplains in the Army. They also carried on negotiations with the other Presbyterian Churches. In October 1884 the English Presbyterian Church put forward a proposal that the Committee consider the appointment of a chaplain to "act as virtually the Presbyterian Chaplain General."¹⁶⁴ The Committee rejected this proposal regarding it to be inexpedient at that particular time.

Over time the Committee continued to monitor the work of the military both within Scotland and abroad. In 1892 it came to the attention of the Committee that when H.M.S. Ramillies had been launched in the river Clyde the service of dedication had been performed by an Episcopalian clergyman. The Committee pointed out to the military authorities that this was in contravention of a agreement of 1876 that gave positive assurances that all such ceremonies in Scotland would be performed by ministers of the national Church. It was subsequently agreed that all future launching ceremonies would be conducted by Church of Scotland ministers.¹⁶⁵

One final example of the good work of the Chaplains' Committee prior to the First World War arose over the provision of adequately trained Presbyterian ministers to serve as military chaplains overseas. On 30 April 1900, "the Convener reported that on learning that the Seaforth Militia were ordered to Egypt he had entered into correspondence with the War Office regarding the appointment of a Gaelic-speaking chaplain."¹⁶⁶ The Committee's responsibilities were growing.

¹⁶⁴Army and Navy Chaplains Committee Minute Book Two, 1867-1909, p.115.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p.177.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p.219.

The Great War saw a tremendous increase in the number of chaplains, from 117 chaplains when the war started, to 3475 when the armistice was signed in 1918. These included: 1,985 Anglicans, 649 Roman Catholics, 302 Presbyterians, 256 Wesleyans and 251 United Board.¹⁶⁷ Of the 800 ministers of the Church of Scotland who were of military age between 1914-1918, more than half of them served as chaplains or as combatants, and many more carried on the function of OCF or helper in the Church Huts.

During the summer of 1914 the Chaplains Committee of the Church of Scotland was fully occupied with the problems of mobilization. In the first instance the Church was asked to select twenty, and the United Free Church twelve, Territorial chaplains to undertake regular service.¹⁶⁸ The War Office also asked the Committee to begin recruiting more ministers who were not already TA chaplains. By May 1915 the Chaplains Committee had identified some two hundred willing volunteers, of whom only a few had by now been called forward. Initially these early Commissions were for three months in duration. By the close of 1915 there were 133 Presbyterian chaplains serving overseas.¹⁶⁹ The official figures for 1917 show that in addition to the eleven regular and twenty nine TA chaplains called up for the duration of the war, there were 215 other Scottish ministers who served for periods of less than one year.

Chaplaincy recruitment in the Great War was a major problem not least because appointments were initially for only three months and the losses due to death and injury were high. By May 1915 the Church of Scotland Committee was suggesting that Commissions be extended to at least six months or for the duration of the war.

¹⁶⁷A Wilkinson, Dissent or Conform?, (London 1986), p.39.

¹⁶⁸Dow, Ministers To The Soldiers of Scotland, 1856-1845, p.126.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p.127.

Some congregations now became reluctant to release their ministers for an indefinite period. Other congregations allowed their minister to complete two or three tours of duty. John White, for example, served as chaplain in France with the 5th Battalion The Cameronians from August 1915 to September 1916.¹⁷⁰

The close of hostilities brought little respite from recruiting. Fifty Presbyterian chaplains were required for the Army of Occupation. In May 1919 The Glasgow Herald reported that 113 Scottish chaplains had been released but that another 189 were still serving.¹⁷¹ The problems of war service were accentuated by the haphazard and badly planned demobilization of officers and men, including chaplains.

After the War the denominational share of Commissions in the Army Chaplains' Department remained controversial, but the issue was overshadowed by plans to unify the Chaplains Department. An Army Order (No. 92) published on 22 February 1919 read as follows:

Army Chaplains' Department. His Majesty the King, in view of the splendid work which has been performed by the Army Chaplains' Department during the present War, has been graciously pleased to approve of the Department being in future designated - The Royal Army Chaplains' Department.¹⁷²

This was indeed a fitting recognition of the work of Army chaplains of all denominations in the Great War. On Armistice Day 1918 the total number of chaplains in the Department, exclusive of overseas chaplains and those engaged locally in foreign stations, was 3,474. The denominational split was as follows:

Church of England: 1985

Roman Catholic: 649

¹⁷⁰A Muir, John White, (London 1958), p.177ff.

¹⁷¹Dow, p.129.

¹⁷²Smyth, p.203.

Presbyterian: 302.

Wesleyan: 256.

United Board: 251.¹⁷³

Jewish: 16

Welsh Calvinist: 10

Salvation Army: 5

With so many religious groups represented in the Chaplains Department it is hardly surprising that calls were made to form a unified Department. This occurred in 1920 when the post-war reorganisation scheme for Army chaplaincy was announced, which on the whole remained in force throughout the inter-war years.

The history of this reorganisation, from the Presbyterian point of view, had begun in November 1907 when Lord Balfour suggested that the time had come for a rationalisation of the Presbyterian chaplaincy services and interests. Even under the single Presbyterian banner there was no one at this time who could speak with one voice from a position of authority. Church of Scotland, United Free Church, English and Irish Presbyterians all had ministers serving as chaplains and filling Presbyterian vacancies in the Department. It was therefore decided to form a Joint Advisory Committee to co-ordinate Presbyterianism in the military.

In 1916, on the initiative of the Church of Scotland, a joint delegation from the non-Anglican Churches waited upon Lloyd George to urge the need for a reorganisation of the Chaplains' Department. This resulted in the formation of an Interdenominational Advisory Committee on Army Chaplaincy Services.¹⁷⁴ With the aim of securing a fair deal for all denominations represented in the Army, this

¹⁷³ The United Board chaplains came from the Baptist, Congregationalist, Primitive Methodist and United Methodist churches.

committee proved to be both energetic and effective in bringing about change in the Department.

The peace of 1918 created an opportunity for the reorganisation of the Department, which many had long thought to be overdue. In October 1919, the Chaplain General (C.G.) submitted his proposals to the Interdenominational Committee for comment. It was suggested that the C.G. be appointed over all denominations with a deputy who would belong to a denomination other than the Church of England. The eight Home Commands in the Army were each to have an Assistant Chaplain General or A.C.G. in charge. It was proposed that five of these would be automatically chaplains of the Church of England and the remainder from other denominations.¹⁷⁵ It was assumed that the C.G. would always be an Anglican minister, regardless of ability or experience in the Department. (This remained the case until the appointment of the Rev James Harkness, a Church of Scotland minister, finally broke this Anglican succession in January 1988.)

Initially the Roman Catholic and the Church of Scotland representatives on the Interdenominational Advisory Committee raised doubts as to whether or not their churches would be happy delegating responsibility for their chaplains to anyone except the sending Church. It would be another year before an amended scheme was finally accepted with reservations by the Scottish Churches.

A confidential memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, Winston S. Churchill, and dated 12 December 1919, outlined the future structure of the Chaplains' Department and the remuneration of chaplains.¹⁷⁶ This memorandum explained that

¹⁷⁴Dow, 1856-1945, p.153.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p.154.

¹⁷⁶War Office Document entitled Interdenominational Advisory Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, 1919, PRO, WO/32/10482.

experience gained during World War One showed clearly the need for considerable changes in the organisation and conditions of service in the Chaplains' Department. A new scheme was sanctioned and approved in June 1919 According to the War Office:

The essence of this scheme was that the Chaplains Department should be organised in classes or grades, to each of which a fixed establishment was to be assigned and promotion from one to the next higher should be by selection. Also the pay of chaplains should be raised to an equality with that of combatant officers of corresponding rank in the infantry.¹⁷⁷

The amended scheme was embodied in the Report of the Chaplains Committee to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1920. The scheme made the following proposals:

1. "The Secretary of the War Office will henceforth be responsible to the Secretary of State for War for the general policy governing the administration of all Army Chaplaincy services as part of the military organisation." The Department was thus to be brought into line with the rest of the Army.

2. "He will have the advantage of counsel from the Interdenominational Advisory Committee which will probably need to meet less frequently in future." It was hoped that if the Interdenominational committee would devolve responsibility of their ministers to the Chaplain General, the Committee could be called to meet only when important decisions were being made, but otherwise the day to day running of the Department would be left to the C.G. and his staff.

3. "The military administration of the Royal Army Chaplains Department at the War Office shall, subject to 1, be under the Chaplain General (C.G.) of the Forces assisted by the Deputy Chaplain General (D.C.G.) and while necessary, by a Staff

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

Chaplain. When the C.G. belongs to the Church of England, the D.C.G. shall belong to one of the other Churches.”

4. “At the headquarters of each of the 8 commands at home there shall be an Assistant Chaplain General (A.C.G.) responsible, under the General Officer Commanding, for the application of War Office policy to the particular circumstances of his command in all matters affecting the military administration of the Department. An A.C.G. shall not exercise any supervisory authority outside the limits of his command....” This proposal goes on to also say that the A.C.G. has to deal with OCF's but he “shall have no authority over the officiating clergymen in matters affecting his ecclesiastical position, but will be expected to afford them such guidance and assistance as he can in the discharge of their duties....” OCF's will be both appointed and disciplined only by accredited members of their own Church. Denominational integrity was to be preserved at all times.

During the 1914-18 War, it was found necessary to appoint Assistant Chaplain Generals (ACGs) to the headquarters of each home command to deal with local Church of England chaplaincy services, and in 1918 a principal chaplain for each major denomination other than the Church of England was attached to the Chaplains Department of the War Office in an advisory capacity, “corresponding more or less with the Chaplain General.”¹⁷⁸ An assistant principal chaplain for each of these denominations was posted to the headquarters staff of each command to deal with the local chaplaincy services of their respective denominations.

5. “Appointments to the higher posts in the Royal Army Chaplains’ Department (RACHD) will be made by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Secretary of the War Office, after consideration of the personal qualifications of all

those who are eligible, due regard being had to the desirability of ensuring that all the Churches shall be adequately represented, if they can furnish suitably qualified chaplains, and to the special circumstances of the post. The normal tenure will be four years, as in the case of other staff appointments.” The “special circumstances” appear with hindsight to have meant that the CG had to be an Anglican.

6. Each Church (or group of Churches) represented in the Royal Army Chaplains’ Department was to appoint a representative as a “nexus between it and the War Office” in regard to chaplaincy matters in the Regular and Territorial Army. This requirement in the Church of Scotland was devolved to the Chaplains’ Committee which in turn was to nominate clergymen of the Church for appointment as chaplains and as OCF’s and to exercise oversight over them in their religious ministrations to troops.

7. “Nothing in this scheme shall impair the provision made in the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland for safeguarding the recognition of Presbyterianism as the established Church in Scotland.” The Church of Scotland Chaplains Committee had won the day in regard to ensuring proper recognition of Kirk ministers in all military affairs in Scotland and amongst Scottish troops abroad. The Interdenominational Advisory Committee agreed that:

In any national ceremonial of a military nature in Scotland due regard should be had for the provisions of the Act of Security under the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland, i.e. that the introduction of a new system of administration for the RACHD should not entail any departure from the present practice in regard to ceremonials of this nature.¹⁷⁹

8. Four groups would be recognised under the unification scheme: “(a.)Church of England; (b.)Presbyterian; (c.)Wesleyan; (d.)United Board of the Baptist,

¹⁷⁸Appendix A to I.A.C.C./P(56). See above reference.

¹⁷⁹Dow, 1856-1945, pp.157-158.

Congregational, Primitive Methodist and United Methodist Churches.” In 1932 the union of the Methodists amalgamated the two Methodist groups. The Roman Catholic Church decided to remain independent of the unified Department:

The Roman Catholic Church feels itself precluded from participation, and Roman Catholic Chaplaincy services will therefore revert to the pre-war system of administration, i.e. each Roman Catholic Chaplain and OCF (RC) will, as far as military administration is concerned, be under the control of the Officer Commanding Troops at the station at which he is serving, and the War Office administration of Roman Catholic Chaplaincy services will be conducted by a lay official of the War Office Staff, under the direction of the Secretary of the War Office. The ecclesiastical oversight of Roman Catholic Chaplaincy Services, like that of chaplaincy services of other denominations will be vested in the functionary appointed for the purpose for the purpose by the responsible authorities of the church concerned...Roman Catholics will continue to be represented on the Interdenominational Advisory Committee.¹⁸⁰

(To this day Roman Catholic Chaplains retain their interdependence under the Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain.)

9. “The scheme shall be tried as an experiment for a period of four years...” In December 1922 it was decided, with the agreement of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee that the operation of the Unified Scheme had proved, on the whole, successful and that it should be extended to the overseas commands as from 1 January 1923.

On 3 April 1924, when the experimental period was up, the matter was again considered by the Advisory Committee. The members were unanimous that the scheme had been successful and the Secretary of State asserted that all parties were in favour of the continuance of the Unified Scheme. (There was no subsequent general review of the Unified Department until 1956.) Under the scheme of 1920 the office of Deputy Chaplain General at the War Office was officially instituted and the Rev W. Stevenson Jaffray, a minister of the Church of Scotland, was the first to fill the post.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Consideration will now be given to the situation that prevailed in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department before 1939 with regard to numbers and the division of chaplains by denomination.

In 1923 it was announced that Commissions in the RACHD would be shared as follows: 105 to the Church of England, 20 to the Roman Catholic Church, 12 to the Presbyterian Churches, 7 to the Wesleyans and 5 to the United Board.¹⁸¹ The Presbyterian quota was then subdivided to give six commissions to the Church of Scotland, four to the United Free Church, one to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and one to the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of England alternatively.

The method of appointment of regular Church of England chaplains in peace time was laid down as follows: Application was made to the C.G., through the ACG of the Command in which they lived, with a letter from the Bishop of the diocese and the names of three clerical referees. Following a satisfactory interview with the C.G., the candidate was awarded the King's Commission.

Candidates from the Church of Scotland were selected by interview with the Chaplains' Committee of the Church of Scotland. If approval was granted by the Presbytery and the Chaplain General, a candidate secured a commission. Originally the age limit was thirty and if selected successful men were given a Temporary Commission in the 4th Class for a period of three years. The establishment of chaplains for each denomination was based on a ratio of one chaplain for each 1100 men enlisted of that denomination. With the outbreak of World War Two this latter figure was raised to 1250.

¹⁸¹Ibid., p.151.

RACHD MANNING FIGURES

FOR 1920 AND 1956

Table 1. The Regular establishment of Regular Army Chaplains for 1920, calculated on a ratio of one chaplain to 1100 men, was as follows:

CLASS	CofE	CofS	METH	UB	RC	TOTAL
1ST	7	1	1	NIL	2	11
2ND	17	2	1	1	2	23
3RD	19	2	1	1	3	26
4TH	34	3	3	1	5	46
OCF'S	23	3	2	2	4	34
TOTAL	100	11	8	5	16	140

Table 2. The New Permanent Regular Establishment for 1956, calculated on a ratio of one chaplain to every 1,000 men, was as follows:

CLASS	CofE	CofS	METH	UB	RC	TOTAL
1ST	8	1	1	1	2	13
2ND	27	3	2	1	4	37
3RD	37	5	2	1	6	51
4TH	69	8	6	3	13	99
TOTAL	141	17	11	6	25	200
						Plus CG

1. Figures obtained from the Records of the RACHD 1920-1956.

On 7 October 1926 the Chaplain General sent a confidential War Office memorandum to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, stating that “at the moment there is no definite scheme for the RACHD in the event of mobilisation.”¹⁸² He went on to say, “I quite agree (with the Roman Catholic Bishop in Ordinary for the British Army), that the Chaplains’ Department on active service should be a completely unified entity, but I consider that it would be more satisfactory to obtain the written consent of the Roman Catholic authorities in the matter.”

In 1926 the home establishment of Commissioned chaplains was 104:

Church of England: 77

Presbyterian: 8

Roman Catholic: 12

Wesleyan: 3

United Board: 4

It was also at this time that the C.G. approached the Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) of State for War with a plan to form a Regular Army Reserve of Officers (RARO) for the RACHD: “I think I am right in saying,” he noted, “that ours is the only department or arm of the service without a RARO.”¹⁸³

The minutes of the 63rd meeting of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee held at the War Office on 5 November 1930 ratified the position of Roman Catholics in the event of mobilisation: “The Chairman stated that Bishop Keatinge, the RC Bishop in Ordinary for the British Army, had agreed that in the event of war, and for the duration only, RC chaplains should be included under one administrative system

¹⁸²War Office file held in the PRO, WO/32/4016, entitled, Chaplaincy Arrangements on Mobilization.

¹⁸³Ibid.

with the rest of the Department.”¹⁸⁴ Keatinge had made this position clear in a letter to Sir Herbert Creedy, then PUS of State for War, on 16 January 1930: “I would be willing to include the RC chaplains in one administrative system...because I consider a dual system would not work satisfactorily in the field and would throw extra work on the Adjutant General’s Department at a difficult time.”¹⁸⁵ According to Keatinge joint administration had worked well in the last war; “except in France and Flanders there was a united system of administration, which appears to have worked quite smoothly, and the dual system in France and Flanders was apparently not an administrative necessity but rather an embarrassment.”¹⁸⁶

II

SCOTTISH CHAPLAINS AND RECRUITMENT

1939-45

The approved establishment of the Royal Army Chaplains’ Department in April 1939 was 154 chaplains, including the Chaplain General and Deputy Chaplain General.¹⁸⁷ A meeting at the War Office in June 1939 agreed that the number of chaplains should be increased immediately by 43 men. In a confidential minute from the Deputy Chaplain General to the Permanent Under Secretary of State for War, it was agreed that for the time being only “Emergency Commissions” in common with all other arms of the service could be given. This measure prevented any artificial amendments to the overall chaplains establishment. “The denominational entitlement of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, Minute 13B.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., Minute dated 8 May 1929.

regimental chaplains,” it was recorded, “is fixed on the denominational representation in the Army, based on a five year average of the figures for religious denomination given in the General Annual Report on the Army.”¹⁸⁸ The raw statistics for the denominational bias of the Army were taken from the declared religion of the recruit as he entered the recruiting office. The “don't knows” or unsure were inevitably listed as CofE in England or CofS in Scotland.

The mood of the people was very different in Britain in September 1939 than it had been in August 1914. The nation had no illusions about the human costs of modern war but people felt compelled once again to support a total national commitment for self-defence. In 1939 conscription began six months before war broke out, whereas in the First World War it had not started until January 1916. In February 1939 a target of thirty two divisions: six Regular and twenty-six Territorial, was established. Munitions factories for tanks, guns and aircraft had to be staffed. Compulsory service was seen to be the only way to ensure maximum manning.

In January 1939 the government had attempted to reach its manpower target with a National Service Appeal, but it soon realised that more coercion was necessary. “On 26 April 1939,” writes Trevor Royle, “Hore Belisha rose in the House of Commons to announce his plans for conscription which were contained in the Military Training Bill. This gave the government the power to call up for military training all men between the ages of 20-21.”¹⁸⁹ Subsequent National Service (Armed Forces) Acts, adjusted the age range of potential recruits to those between 18-45. This was extended to fifty one years in 1941. By the end of 1941 there were 4,320,000

¹⁸⁷War Office Document held in PRO, WO/32/12038, entitled, Recruitment of Chaplains for the Regular Army.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹T Royle, The Best Years of Their Lives, The National Service Experience 1945-63 , (London 1986), p.17.

conscripts. In all 16,416,000 men and women registered for non-military national service during World War Two.¹⁹⁰

An editorial article in the Church of Scotland monthly magazine, Life And Work, in 1939, entitled, “The Church in War Time”, outlined the task that lay before the Church and people now that war had been declared.

In the days that lie ahead of us all, the Church will have the greatest task of all... new avenues of service will open up. In the less dangerous zones ministers and Church members will have opportunities of showing Christian hospitality and kindly fellowship to thousands of children and others torn from their homes...If we believe that we are fighting to preserve things of spiritual value in Europe and in the world, let us put spiritual things first in the life of our own land.¹⁹¹

Great moral questions now faced members of the clergy. Where could they best serve the Church, at home or in the armed forces? Who would look after the parish were they to volunteer? The tension and the responsibility was enormous as can be seen in a letter printed in the November 1939 edition of Life and Work. The article was called “Preaching Today”:

Many ministers tell how difficult they have found it to preach during these last weeks; but with the next breath they will tell you that have never before felt so constrained to preach. The difficulty is due to an overwhelming sense of responsibility, and from the same sense of responsibility rises the urge to speak...those who attend Church today do so out of a real sense of need and real expectation....¹⁹²

There was no conscription of chaplains during the Second World War. In a brochure produced after May 1945 called, Occupation of Germany, plans and policy affecting The Brotherhood of Chaplains, 21 Army Group, the foreword written by Geoffrey Druitt, Deputy Chaplain General defended this policy:

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p.18.

¹⁹¹Life and Work, Vol. X, 1939, p.406.

¹⁹²Life and Work, Nov 1939, p.449.

War is a hateful business, but it does offer such immense opportunities to men like ourselves who have a sacred vocation to fulfill. Conscription did not force you into the service. You volunteered and agreed to serve until your job was completed. It is a proud record that every officer in the RACHD is a volunteer.¹⁹³

In January 1939, as international tensions increased, John White suggested to the General Administrative Committee of the Church of Scotland that a Committee on Church and National Service be established. This committee was appointed:

To prepare a scheme for the mobilizing of the forces and resources of the Church in such ways as would best enable the Church to continue to discharge its spiritual mission to the nation and also undertake any special additional tasks that might be laid upon the Church at such a time of crisis.¹⁹⁴

White and the Rev P.D. Thomson were appointed conveners and subcommittees were appointed to ensure the adequate mobilization of the Church's man-power, the best use of its available buildings and the preparation of essential financial schemes.

During the year 1938-39 the Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces reviewed the number of ministers in the Reserve Forces that could be called upon quickly in the event of a national emergency. It was discovered that "the number of ministers of the Church of Scotland in the Reserve was small, and most were over the age for active service."¹⁹⁵ The declaration of war in September 1939, however, produced a large number of volunteers and many were subsequently enlisted as chaplains. None the less, there was still a need to have an adequate reserve of ministers prepared to serve with both the Regular and the Territorial Army. To this end the Chaplains' Committee petitioned Presbyteries and received a good response in

¹⁹³RACHD 21 Army Group Document, entitled: Occupation of Germany: plans and policy affecting the Brotherhood of Chaplains.

¹⁹⁴General Administration Committee Report of Committee on Church and National Service to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 1939, p.935.

finding sufficient ministers ready to be called up for the reserve forces. This “demonstrated that ministers are willing and anxious to serve their country and to carry on this sphere of the Church's work provided they are given the necessary lead.”¹⁹⁶

On 28 February 1939 Sir John Anderson, the Lord Privy Seal, had written to the Convener of the Church and National Service Committee:

Ministers of religion have not been included in the Schedule of Reserved Occupations...having regard to the need for maintaining the spiritual ministrations of the Churches in time of war, ministers should not regard it as incumbent upon them to undertake obligations for whole-time service in war - except, of course, as chaplains....¹⁹⁷

A confidential letter dated 21 March 1939 sent to John White by Rev W.T. Elmslie, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of England, reinforced Anderson's view that there was no reason why chaplains or ministers should “not avail themselves of training in the methods of air raid precaution and in first aid.”¹⁹⁸

On 18 April 1939 it was reported to the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces that the War Office was now prepared to consider applications from ministers up to the age of 45 years. On 15 September 1943 the age limit was raised to enable the chaplaincy service to accept a limited number of ministers between 50 and 55 years. But by 26 January 1944, the convener reported that the War Office had now advised the Committee that it did not wish to commission ministers as chaplains who were over the age of 50 years.¹⁹⁹

At the outbreak of war the Chaplains Committee responded to the initial demand for more chaplains by advertising in The Scotsman, Glasgow Herald,

¹⁹⁵Church of Scotland Report of The Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, May 1939, p.803.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p.804.

¹⁹⁷Church and National Service Report, May 1939, p.937.

¹⁹⁸John White papers, box 20, letter, 21 Mar 1939,

Aberdeen Free Press and Dundee Advertiser.²⁰⁰ Ministers were reminded that they must keep in mind that any service which would interfere with their work as ministers, should not be undertaken without the consent of the Presbytery: "For it will be the Presbytery, having regard to all the circumstances, to decide what piece of National Service a minister should undertake."²⁰¹ The procedure for application was therefore spelt out to the General Assembly of May 1939 by both the Committee of Church and National Service and by the Chaplains' Committee.

No minister may be commissioned without the consent of the Church Authorities; by the Deliverance of the General Assembly of 1931...it was laid down that in the case of the Church of Scotland such consent was to be given by the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces after obtaining the consent of the Presbytery to which the minister belonged.²⁰²

The Church of Scotland Committees sought Presbyteries help in the smooth passage of recruitment, by laying down the following guidelines:

1. In the case of men already chaplains, the Presbyteries were advised to make arrangements forthwith for the carrying on of parochial duty as soon as the chaplain is called up...Without delay Presbyteries should make arrangements to appoint an interim Moderator who will be responsible for the congregational work until arrangements can be made for a locum-tenens. In addition financial arrangements were to be made, "under the general consideration that no man should make gain by his service to the nation in time of need."²⁰³

¹⁹⁹Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, Minute Book, 22 Oct 1929 to 21 Feb 1951, pp.199,599 and 611.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p.201.

²⁰¹Committee on Church and national Service, May 1939, p.938.

²⁰²Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, May 1939, pp. 804-805.

²⁰³Committee on Church and National Service, May 1939, p.938f.

2. A minister should receive the permission of his Presbytery before making application to the Chaplains' Committee. It would then be up to the parish to judge whether the work in the parish can be carried out in his absence, and give or withhold permission accordingly.

3. If any minister desires to go as a combatant in the event of war or to undertake service in the Territorial Army or other service which will involve his absence from the parish or his full time employment, so that he is not able to do his congregational work, such desire or appointment should be intimated without delay to the Presbytery.

4. Presbyteries should also take into account the transfer of population which would be carried out in the event of war, due to evacuation measures, and a survey carried out to assess the possibility of putting neighbouring congregations under one minister.

It was perhaps inevitable with the impending demand on ministerial manpower that the question of war service and divinity students was discussed at the 1939 General Assembly. John White saw no reason why divinity students should not undertake combatant duties. Professor E.P. Dickie of St Andrews believed that they were either conscientious objectors or they were not. In a letter to White dated St Andrews 4 June 1939, Dickie stated:

I disagreed heartily with my colleagues who presented the amendment [regarding the exemption of divinity students from war service]...they should be classed with other students...I deprecate (and deny!) the suggestion that a man cannot serve Christianity and the Church in the ranks of the army!²⁰⁴

The point was powerfully made by this university professor who had himself won an MC in the Great War, but the situation was more complicated than he supposed.

On 8 September 1939 John White was informed by the Procurator to the General Assembly, Mr. J.F. Strachen, of a legal judgement concerning the “Liability of Probationers for Military Service.” It referred to the National Service Act passed in September 1939 and particularly to Section 11, which laid down that “no person shall be liable to be called up for service who...is a man in Holy Orders or a minister of any religious denomination.” The Procurator went on to give his considered opinion that these words were a repetition of section 4 of the first schedule of the Military Service Act 1916, and that under the 1916 act two cases were brought to court. “In one of these cases the court held that a licentiate of the United Free Church was liable for military service.” The Procurator further advised, “that a decision as to whether the present exemptions applies to probationers will not rest with the Church....”²⁰⁵

An exchange of letters in September 1939 between John White and Professor William Fulton of Glasgow University highlighted the key points in the debate over “Students for the Ministry and Reserved Occupation.” Fulton pointed out the Archbishop of Canterbury's desire, along with the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church and the Free Churches in England, to approach the Minister of Labour to make some concession towards students already established on theological training for the ministry. Fulton was concerned to avoid “a flock into the ministry in order to escape compulsory military service.”²⁰⁶ Charles L. Warr, minister of St Giles, added to the debate by writing to John White and Ernest Brown, Minister of Labour, on 5 October 1939. He stated that he firmly believed that exemptions from military service should only be granted to final year men:

²⁰⁴John White Papers, Box 20. Folio 20.2.

²⁰⁵Ibid., Letter dated 8 September 1939.

²⁰⁶Ibid., Letter dated 11 September 1939.

I have grave apprehensions as to the future repercussions on theological students who through the action of their ecclesiastical superiors are thus being cut off from the remainder of the country's youth in an hour when all are summoned to service and sacrifice.²⁰⁷

As the war proceeded the debate over who should and who should not be exempt from military service continued. The fall of France caused John White and his colleagues to reassess the situation regarding Church students. White wrote to Ernest Brown in July 1940, saying that he felt the time had come for students no longer to take advantage of the choice being given them, namely to be exempt from military service, and instead to be offered some branch of national service such as air force ground crew or munitions work:

One is not only deeply concerned about the needs of the nation but also about the future influence of the young men who will be leading the Church and whose influence would be greatly strengthened by their National Service side by side with their brothers in conflict."²⁰⁸

Even George MacLeod, despite his pacifist tendencies, came around to seeing that the future reputation of the Church could be damaged permanently if ministers of the Kirk did not take a stand alongside the fighting men of the Second World War. On 16 March 1941, MacLeod wrote to White:

As you know, I was as much against the original 'reservation' as you were hoping that men would either have to go through the hoop of conscription or of tribunal. Thus the Church would have been more finely served in days to come...If conscription be a probable permanency, I think the matter should be fully looked into in regard to the future.²⁰⁹

In May 1941 the Committee on Church and Nation reported to the General Assembly that "the distinction between combatant and non-combatant is no longer so

²⁰⁷Ibid., Letter dated 5 October 1939.

²⁰⁸Ibid., Letter dated 19 July 1940.

clear cut as it was even 25 years ago, and the registration of women for war service and their labour in munitions factories put them on a war footing...they can no longer claim the protection of non-combatancy....”²¹⁰

During 1941 the Church of Scotland Committee on Church and National Service continued to monitor the recruitment situation and the use of the church’s manpower. The Committee wrote to all licentiates and theological students of military age, reminding them that the Schedule of “Reserved Occupations” did not preclude them from service in H.M. Forces. A year later the Committee were asking Presbyteries to decide where ministers were absolutely essential and to reassess where the church’s manpower might be best employed.

The opportunities before the ministers of the Church in wartime were exceptional. These were to be found in five different areas: (1) in the home parishes; (2) in the chaplaincy services among the Forces; (3) in the Huts and Canteens work of the church; (4) in civil engineering and lumber camps; and (5) in the factories and yards turning out war materials of all kinds. “The Church,” argued the Committee on Church and National Service, “has to recognise its task, it has to look with realistic eyes on things as they are, and organise its ministry to serve a people organised for war.”²¹¹ The Church authorities were not solely concerned about finding ministers to serve as chaplains with the Regular forces. They were also anxious to recruit to the Territorial Army, the Huts and Canteens Organisation and the YMCA, OCF appointments and the Church on the home front.

²⁰⁹Ibid., Letter dated 16 March 1941.

²¹⁰Report of the Committee on Church and Nation to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 1941, p.341.

²¹¹Committee on Church and National Service, May 1942, p.675.

By May 1943 serious concern was being expressed in committee circles of the Church of Scotland over the shortage of ministers and probationers available for war service. As a result Presbyteries renewed their efforts to release ministerial manpower, regardless of age or experience, and it was therefore with some concern that the convener of the Church and National Service Committee reported to the General Assembly of May 1943 that “the Committee on Chaplains is still not provided with the reserve of fifty ministers it needs. It is just able to supply immediate needs and no more.”²¹² Attention was now also being given to post-war manning and the shortage of candidates currently available for theological training.

At the end of 1943 there were 140 fewer active ministers in the Church than in 1939, and by the end of 1944 it was believed that there would probably be 200 fewer ministers than in 1939.²¹³ Steps were now to be taken to find suitable Lay Readers to cover ministerial duties in Scotland. As the War drew to a close, the General Assembly of May 1945 noted with grave concern the serious decrease during the War years in the number of ministers and probationers available for vacancies at home and overseas, and the no less serious increase in the number of vacancies which require to be filled in both fields. The General Assembly also noted that a considerable number of chaplains would be required after the war in Europe was over to serve with the forces in the Far East.²¹⁴

Appendices one and two to this chapter contain a tabular summary of the Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by the Committee on Education for the Ministry and Probationers 1939-45. These statistics show that the

²¹²Church and National Service, May 1943, p.503

²¹³Church and National Service, May 1944, p.554.

²¹⁴Report of Committee on Church and National Service, May 1945, p.558.

overall number of students taking entrance examinations to theological colleges and attending courses dropped by almost two thirds between 1938-39 and 1945-46. On average 55% of all those taking the entrance examination passed. However only 26 candidates took the exams in 1945-46 compared to 148 in the academic year 1938-39.

It was inevitable that the number of pulpit supply engagements would increase in war-time. The greatest increase was in Glasgow where the 1945-46 figure was more than three times the demand for 1938-39.

Appendix two shows the dispersion of qualified probationers and ordained assistants in the war years. Total numbers show a steady decline from 179 in the academic year 1939-40 to the lowest figure of 104 in 1945-46. The table also shows the variety of employment opportunities that were open to probationers and ordained assistants during the Second World War.

The outbreak of war resulted in a large increase in the establishments of the Chaplaincy Departments, particularly in the Army. Throughout the War the Church of Scotland was able to respond to demands for more chaplains. This was due largely to the forward planning of the Chaplains' Committee. In May 1940 the Committee was able to claim that "the Church of Scotland [has] met all demands made on it, and all units called up for active service had their full complement of Church of Scotland Commissioned Chaplains. The same remarks apply to the Navy and to the Royal Air Force."²¹⁵ This remained true throughout the War.

Despite the large number of ministers volunteering for war service there was a constant need to retain a reserve, not only to meet new requirements but also to replace casualties. It was understood at an early stage that it would be impossible to predict when volunteers would be called forward. Therefore Presbyteries,

congregations and parish ministers had to make careful preparatory arrangements. In addition to getting ready for war service many ministers found themselves conducting services and doing work among men already in the services who were stationed in their local area. A number of such ministers were formally appointed as Officiating Chaplains to the Forces (OCF's), but there were many more who gave unofficial service.

As far as the Army was concerned, the outbreak of war led to the abolition of the distinction between the Regular and Territorial Army. No further commissions were granted in the Reserve of either of these forces, and from 3 September 1939, ministers were granted Emergency Commissions only for the duration of the War. With the expanding numbers in the Army and their scattered locations the demand for Officiating Chaplains continued to increase. According to the Committee on Chaplains, "there was hardly a parish where troops in large or small number were not stationed, and if no commissioned chaplain was available the local minister undertook the necessary work."²¹⁶ The Committee kept a careful eye upon the expanding Army and every effort was made to see that men of the Church of Scotland were ministered to by a Commissioned Presbyterian chaplain or by an Officiating Presbyterian chaplain to the Forces.

The Rev David H.C. Read was ordained on 1 October 1936 and inducted into the rural parish of Coldstream on the banks of the river Tweed. He was highly critical of the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and utterly shocked by the Munich agreement:

²¹⁵Report of the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, May 1940, p.1.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.5.

It was a trauma such as I have seldom had. It was the first time that I felt ashamed of my country and so after Munich I was determined to get into the Army. I was sure we were going to have to fight Hitler. All I had was an interview with a lawyer in Edinburgh, and signed something. No training or anything.²¹⁷

On 1 September 1939, Read received a telegram calling him up as a reserve chaplain, and telling him to report to No. 11 General Hospital in Netley. He was told that they would soon be forming up to go to France.

The next day I went to London and visited Moss Brothers, the military outfitters. I emerged from the store resplendent in a Captain's uniform and a cap with a chaplain's badge. There I was, with no training whatever in a chaplain's duties, no inkling of what to do next...I made my way back to Netley thinking how different life had suddenly become. I was still a minister of the Kirk - or was I becoming something else?²¹⁸

Read found himself in uniform the day before war was declared.

The Rev Joe Ritchie was minister of Armadale East Church, West Lothian, when war began. Some months before the outbreak of hostilities the Church of Scotland asked younger ministers to volunteer for service. Ritchie enrolled and as soon as war was declared, he was called up and had to leave his congregation in a hurry:

It was my own decision. And when I was called up it was with some trepidation and alarm to leave my way of life and to be called to the unknown...we were all a bit uptight coming into this turmoil of men.²¹⁹

The Rev George Monro had been Sub-Warden in the New College Settlement and had worked in the Gorbals prior to being ordained on 10 April 1935 to a charge in Berwickshire. In 1939 he enlisted as a chaplain into the Territorial Army Reserve of Officers, in response to a letter from the Church, and he was called up in September

²¹⁷Taped interview with the Rev Dr. D.H.C. Read, Edinburgh, 19 March 1993.

²¹⁸D.H.C. Read, This Grace Given, (Michigan 1984), p.91.

²¹⁹ Taped interview with the Rev J Ritchie, Edinburgh, 19 January 1994.

1939. The Presbytery appointed an interim moderator²²⁰ and both his father and father-in-law (both retired ministers) stood in for him for part of the time while New College students helped with the preaching on Sundays.

The Rev Ronald Selby Wright was ordained as minister of the Canongate Kirk in 1937. He was 29 years old. Prior to the War Selby Wright was a Territorial Army Chaplain serving with the 7th/9th Royal Scots which was the City of Edinburgh TA Battalion. They were known as the Old Dandy Ninth:

There came that awful time when we thought we were going to go to war and the whole place changed. It was like two sections; those who felt it would be a great thing to go to war again and there were the people who were horrified at the thought, with the First World War still in their minds. Some of the people were actually looking forward to it. I remember when Munich came how terrified some of us were that it was going to another war...unfortunately appeasement didn't last very long, though many of us longed for appeasement.²²¹

When asked about being actually called up with his TA Battalion, Selby Wright recalled:

I know I was very excited and remember very well I had to help the MO to stick needles into people just before they left. We left from the drill hall in East Claremont Street, Edinburgh...we then all marched together to the band and pipes and drums playing all the way up to the Waverley Station. We were very excited. We went to Kinghorn in Fife and spent our first few months there. It was a great experience for us as we were all together in the Territorials.²²²

Not every minister felt the call immediately to enlist in 1939-40. Some were busy in their parishes ministering to their own people. It was hard to decide where they could best serve the Church. The Rev Gillies Macnab was called to Glasgow Temple Church as minister on 21 December 1938. Nine months later war broke out and he was

²²⁰ An Interim Moderator is appointed by the Presbytery to oversee a congregation at a time of vacancy or the long term absence of the minister. His duties may include arranging pulpit supply each Sunday and chairing the Kirk Session and other regular Church meetings and boards.

²²¹ Taped interview with the Very Rev Dr R Selby Wright, Edinburgh, 28 October 1993.

²²² Ibid.

faced with a dilemma whether to enlist there and then. He decided to wait and only enlisted in 1942. About this time of indecision he remarked:

I have never been easy in my conscience because when war broke out, I had only been there for nine months finding my feet...I was tossed between my duty to the congregation and my duty to the country. I have always been unhappy in my conscience that I was probably selfish and self-seeking but I remained on until 1942 when the Moderator of the General Assembly appealed for more ministers to serve as chaplains...I have never been easy with my conscience staying on, trying to bring this congregation together or whether I should have gone on as others did and volunteered early.²²³

Other men salved their consciences by actively contributing to the war effort at home.

Fraser McLuskey was working as Chaplain to Glasgow University in the early war years:

There was a feeling of great enthusiasm amongst the student community to strengthen the war effort. Many of those who were in the University were in training for Reserved Occupations, but there was a very keen cadet corps...fire-watching was carried on with great zeal...and there was an increasing awareness that we were all in the front line.²²⁴

Glasgow was an obvious enemy target due to its ship-building industry. Air raids were expected constantly and when they came they were very severe. Everyone was needed to help the war effort. McLuskey goes on to say: "I was more than fully employed in the University and had duties in the volunteer medical force driving an ambulance."

After the Glasgow Blitz, in which McLuskey was involved helping the wounded, he decided to enlist as a chaplain:

During the phoney war I had a worthwhile job to do. But as the phoney war period passed and increasingly we heard in the media of the losses sustained by the War, I felt increasingly uneasy not to be sharing the dangers that so many of my fellow countrymen were sharing. So as the feeling grew gradually, I decided I would offer my services as either a combatant or as a chaplain. I

²²³ Taped interview with the Rev Gillies MacNab, Broughtyferry, 5 July 1994.

²²⁴ Taped interview with the Very Rev Dr J.F. McLuskey, Edinburgh, 15 September 1993.

would have been happy to do either, but it was pointed out that I would be more use in my trained capacity and so I decided to enlist as a chaplain.²²⁵

The Rev Bill Burns had been an active member of the Artillery Troop in Glasgow University Officers' Training Corps prior to the War. In 1938 he became a student assistant at Lismahego:

When war started I suggested I might become a chaplain but I wasn't ordained, so I wrote for a Commission in the Gunners. In the OTC I had taken Cert. A and Cert. B training and joined the Officer Cadet Reserve. I was then called up in December 1939 and began training as a Gunner Officer.²²⁶

Burns was to see active service with the Royal Artillery until 1942 when a call for more chaplains resulted in him being ordained on 4 May 1942 as a chaplain to the forces by the Presbytery of Jerusalem which had recently been reconstituted.

When the Second World War broke out the Rev Leonard Small was minister of the West High Church Kilmarnock. "There was a feeling of inevitability," he later recalled, "We were not taken in by Chamberlain and 'his peace in our time'...forces were gathering...but travels in Germany made me very aware of what was happening...."²²⁷ In Kilmarnock the local ministers manned the 'Report and Control' centre for the area, sending out warnings of air raids. Secondly, Small and others were also busy acting as OCF's for troops stationed in and around the town. But Small's main contribution towards the war effort was to volunteer in 1940 to help with the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation.²²⁸

It was not just from Scotland that Presbyterian chaplains were recruited. In 1938 the then Deputy Chaplain General Dr Joseph Lynn went to Ireland to the General

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Taped interview with the Rev Bill Burns, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

²²⁷ Taped interview with the Very Rev Dr R.L. Small, Edinburgh, 3 November 1993.

²²⁸ R.L. Small, *The Holy Goalie*, (Edinburgh 1993), p.34ff.

Assembly and made approaches to all those who might consider a career in Army chaplaincy. In October 1939 the Rev David Henderson enlisted as an officer in the RARO RACHD.²²⁹

In May 1941 the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces reported that all demands for chaplains had been met and all requirements had been fulfilled. They issued a warning, however, that the Committee were not now in the same strong position as it had been the previous year as regards reserves and that more chaplains would be required immediately for all branches of the armed services. The Committee went on to point out to the General Assembly that “just under eight per cent of the ministers of the Church have been commissioned and that not even yet has the point of real sacrifice been reached in the work which is not merely of superlative national importance, but one which will mean everything for the Church in the future.”²³⁰

The Committee was fully aware of the dilemma in which some ministers found themselves: “It is difficult to decide where the duty of a minister lies - to his congregation and work of national and spiritual importance, or to the multitudes of young men and women who have been called to the colours.”²³¹ The General Assembly of 1941 was also made acutely aware of the human cost of war, for it was recorded in the minutes of proceedings that out of fifty-two ministers of the Church of Scotland serving with the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1940, three were killed in action or died of wounds and seven were taken prisoners of war.²³²

²²⁹ Henderson enlisted initially into the Regular Army Reserve of Officers (RARO) for the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RACHD).

²³⁰ Report on the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, May 1941, p.495.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p.496.

²³² *Ibid.*, p.498.

The expansion of the army in 1941-42 increased the demand for chaplains. There was a heavy burden laid upon the Church to supply ministers for service as chaplains. It was seen to be imperative that Scottish troops sent out to war should be accompanied by Church of Scotland or at least Presbyterian chaplains. A memorandum addressed by the Committee on Church and National Service to all Presbyteries in 1942, reinforced the requirement for ministers to make adequate provision for the spiritual oversight of those on active service.

By the end of November 1942 there were 246 ministers on service as chaplains, of whom 39 were ministers not holding a charge. Of the remainder, 22 had resigned their charges since mobilisation. So far as the Committee knew, there were 7 ministers serving as combatants. This resulted in 8% of the parishes in Scotland being without a minister due to war service.²³³ The need for chaplains was now becoming critical and an earnest appeal was made to all ministers and their Kirk Sessions to review the matter and to give more serious consideration to releasing ministers for military duty. "No compulsion could be used or would be used, but the utmost moral persuasion was exercised..."²³⁴ By 1943 total casualties numbered eight killed or died in action, three missing, and fourteen POWs. A combination of the scale of the war and the appeals by the Church resulted in a fresh wave of ministers offering themselves for war service as chaplains.

J.K.S. Reid had been inducted into his first charge of Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh, in July 1939. Here his parish responsibilities included chaplaincy work with youth organisations, especially that of the cadet corps. "Home Guard was a rather

²³³ Report of the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, May 1943, p.1.

²³⁴ Ibid.

empty kind of duty that one had to do.”²³⁵ Many churches were being covered by older men and there was great uncertainty during the early war years.

Reid eventually decided to enlist in 1942. He would have enlisted earlier but parish duties prevented him. It was therefore, “with some impatience” that he waited for the right time to volunteer, which proved to be exactly three years after he had been inducted into the parish ministry. Reid considered joining as a combatant officer but he felt that his training was better suited to the Chaplains’ Department. Professor John Burleigh of New College, University of Edinburgh, acted as locum tenens during Reid's absence, at the same time carrying on his own New College duties during the remainder of the war.

In the more rural areas it was less easy to find adequate cover for absentee clergy caught up by war service. The Rev A.I. Dunlop was minister of Lochgilphead in Argyll, from where many men were away on Naval service. The nearby base at Inverary was used to train Commando and Special Forces. There was thus plenty of pastoral work for Dunlop to do. Indeed until the land battle in Europe intensified there was more to do for the men stationed at home. He eventually enlisted in 1942 “because I was young and active and there was nothing to prevent it. It had become obvious by that time that I would have to go.”²³⁶

The Rev Hamish McIntosh had become a convinced pacifist while a student at Glasgow University and subsequently registered as a conscientious objector. He appeared before a tribunal to justify his stance prior to offering himself for Huts and Canteens work for six months. But as he worked amongst the troops in the Church Huts, his pacifist views were challenged and his thinking changed.

²³⁵ Taped interview with the Rev Prof J.K.S. Reid, Edinburgh, 3 March 1994.

²³⁶ Taped interview with the Rev A.I. Dunlop, Edinburgh, 27 October 1993.

On 1 February 1942 McIntosh became a probationer in Peebles where there was a large assembly point for garrison troops. He was reflecting constantly on whether or not it was right to remain passive in this war. Atlantic convoys were struggling to bring food to Britain and lives were being lost in the process: "Gradually I became unhappy about continuing as an out and out pacifist so I offered myself to the Chaplains Committee...."²³⁷ The Convener of the Committee, a Mr. Simm, interviewed McIntosh and questioned him on his pacifist opinions. Simm then sent him away for a month to reconsider and to assess whether or not his pacifism was still influencing his thinking. A month later he returned and was accepted and later, on 22 June 1943, was ordained by the Presbytery of Peebles as a Chaplain to the Forces.

Two further examples will suffice here to show the increase in chaplaincy recruitment in 1942-43. The first comes from the war-time experiences of Robert Craig. He had been attracted to the political and social radicalism rather than to the pacifism of George MacLeod during his student days between 1935 and 1941. In March 1941 Craig went to Clydebank just after it had endured the Blitz. The local churches needed help and Craig served with the Iona Community in Glasgow. From 1941-43 Craig moved to St John's Perth as the assistant minister. What then was his reason for enlisting as a chaplain in May 1943?

I wouldn't claim anything very high or moral or spiritual but so many of my contemporaries had gone. And so many of my contemporaries had already given their lives in the fighting; starting at Dunkirk, El Alamein, Italy...16 names on the parish church memorial are all my contemporaries. Can I just sit here, or be here, when all that was going on? I just wanted to be where my contemporaries were. I couldn't claim any higher motive than that.²³⁸

²³⁷ Taped interview with the Rev H McIntosh, Edinburgh, 17 March 1994.

²³⁸ Taped interview with the Very Rev Prof R. Craig, Falkland, 6 July 1994.

Craig was eventually ordained as a chaplain on 11 May 1943.

Finally, it was in the spring of 1943 that T.F. Torrance enlisted into the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation. He had been licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in March 1937. But during 1938-39 he was in New York teaching at Auburn Theological Seminary. On his return to Scotland Torrance tried to enlist as a chaplain but there were no vacancies so he went to Oxford to finish his research project. He later returned to Scotland and was ordained and inducted into Alyth Barony Church on 20 March 1940. Soon thousands of Polish evacuees were brought into the parish to work on the land.

By 1943 Torrance decided that the time had come to offer his services to work with the forces abroad largely because he felt it was the general pressure of the time: "one couldn't go on living a relatively easy life even though it was hard work...also friends were away...."²³⁹ So he decided to offer himself as a chaplain. But on the way to enlist Torrance met Charles Warr, then minister of St Giles, who persuaded him that there was a job in the Middle East, not as a chaplain but with the Huts and Canteens. Torrance agreed and went out with that organisation. He saw active service in Egypt, Palestine, North Africa and Italy between 1943-45.

The recruitment record of the Church of Scotland, supplying men to the Royal Army Chaplains' Department during the Second World War was impressive. At no time did the Church fail to meet its commitments. The call to serve in the forces presented Scottish ministers with a difficult challenge. But it was a task that many believed to be essential. In a letter to John White dated 25 February 1943, Rev Cook, serving with 4th/5th Royal Scot Fusiliers, made the following remarks:

²³⁹ Ibid.

With a greater sense of duty than perhaps my congregation thought it necessary for me to feel, I took a chaplaincy and felt the small experience I had of the Army last war would be of use. The men and conditions are really much the same and the problems are identical. One advantage is that we get official encouragement and opportunities both on the religious and on the welfare side than many a Padre got last time. It is worth it.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ John White Papers, Box. 21. Letter dated 25 February 1943.

APPENDIX 1 TO CHAPTER 2

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

1. Statistics used in appendix 1 and 2 were extracted from the Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by the Committee on Education for The Ministry and Probationers 1939-45

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION FOR THE MINISTRY AND PROBATIONERS
1939-46

ENTRANCE EXAMS TO THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES

	1938-39	1939-40	1940-41	1941-42	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46
ENTRANCE EXAMS COMPLETED OVER EXAMS TAKEN	95/148	75/105	30/67	35/64	31/52	18/39	14/24	11/26
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	308	242	192	148	122	116	97	112

PULPIT SUPPLY

	1938-39	1939-40	1940-41	1941-42	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46
EDINBURGH	1058	988	1003	979	1134	1471	1782	1982
GLASGOW	800	921	763	781	1111	1554	1921	2485
ABERDEEN	118	90	56	63	254	308	363	422
TOTAL	1976	1999	1822	1823	2499	3333	4066	4799

APPENDIX 2 TO CHAPTER 2

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

PROBATIONERS AND ORDAINED ASSISTANTS EMPLOYMENT

	1938-39	1939-40	1940-41	1941-42	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46
ASSISTANTS IN HOME CHARGES	99		74	75	78	55	37	42
LOCUM TENANTS	32		27	35	27	18	22	4
HM FORCES			10	8	7	7	8	4
HUTS			8	12	23	18	9	8
INVALIDS	5		6	6	6	5	5	4
SPECIAL WORK PULPIT SUPPLY STUDY	19		45	36	23	33	45	42
TOTALS	155	179	170	172	164	136	126	104

CHAPTER THREE

TRAINING AND MINISTRY ON OPERATIONAL SERVICE

Prior to 1940, Scottish ministers enlisting into the Army as chaplains received no specialist training. Some already had experience of University Officers' Training Corps, Territorial Army service or in the cadet forces, but until June 1940 there was no Royal Army Chaplains' Department centre or depot where additional training could be given. Before the outbreak of the Second World War there was no suggestion that chaplains should go to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the Officers' Training college at Mons or at an Officer Cadet Training Unit, where wartime officers were trained.

During the Great War many young and enthusiastic ministers had felt ill-equipped and unprepared for the tasks they confronted in military service. As one Scottish chaplain of the First World War recalled:

We were without that most invaluable type of preparation for the office which was later provided in the form of preliminary courses. At any rate I speak for myself as an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, when I say that not even a pamphlet giving the barest outline of the duties expected of me accompanied the notice of my appointment and posting.²⁴¹

This lack of training and preparation for military chaplaincy resulted in many ministers putting themselves in places of unnecessary danger and making mistakes due to ignorance of the Army system. Subsequently the troops often regarded their well

²⁴¹Duncan Blair, "Leaves from the journal of a Scottish Padre in The First World War", article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.8, No.57, (June 1954), pp.44-50.

intentioned chaplains, to use Studdert Kennedy's words, with "a mixture of uneasy respect and mild disdain."²⁴²

The Scottish chaplain Duncan Blair, for example, had felt disadvantaged when it came to ministering as an Army padre during the 1914-18 War. He was, he later recalled, "pathetically ill-equipped for the job."²⁴³ He believed that the absence of any clue to the mystery of his duties and the precise nature of a padre's function, in and out of action²⁴⁴, greatly inhibited his ministry.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, in common with all branches of the Army, increased rapidly. The large influx of chaplains prompted the Department to look for a place where all incoming chaplains could be trained in the elementary skills that would be required in their future service.

Eventually in the summer of 1940 a new chaplains' school opened at the Chester Training College. The first course assembled on 11 June 1940.²⁴⁵

For two and half years the chaplains' training centre remained at Chester. In October 1942 the Rev Frank Woods was appointed Commandant and at the end of that year he was responsible for moving the centre to a new venue which occupied the Old Rectory at Tidworth, on the edge of Salisbury Plain. Courses began in January 1943 at Tidworth and there it remained for the rest of the war. It was not until the 25 April 1947 that the RACHD Training Centre and Depot opened at Bagshot Park, the former home of the late Duke of Connaught.

²⁴²Ibid., p.45. G.Studdert Kennedy was a highly respected Anglican Chaplain in the 1914-18 war. He earned the nickname of "Woodbine Willie."

²⁴³Ibid., p.45.

²⁴⁴Ibid., p.46.

²⁴⁵G.R. Whitcombe, "The Royal Army Chaplain's Department Depot", article in the RACHD Journal, Vol.7, No.49, (July 1955), p.47.

This chapter will focus upon the various levels of training that were given to Scottish Chaplains who enlisted for war service between 1939-45. As the war developed it became apparent that all chaplains, including those from north of the border, had to be trained to a greater or lesser extent on how to minister in the field of battle. Initially, basic training was intended to orientate the clergy of all denominations into the Army's way of life. Later it was realised that for their own safety and operational effectiveness, chaplains needed to be given some further continuation training, including field-craft. This chapter will also examine the experience of some Scottish chaplains who were themselves to take on some collective training responsibilities and duties during the war.

I

TRAINING

The value of having a trained rather than an untrained chaplain on the battlefield was very quickly realised and great emphasis was placed upon ensuring that throughout their service, chaplains were progressively trained for the tasks that lay ahead. Training therefore can be broken down into three categories:

- (a.) Basic or recruit training.
- (b.) Continuation training and battle inoculation.
- (c.) Specialist training. e.g. Parachute training.

Prior to June 1940, as we have seen, chaplains were deployed to their units without any formal training package. This is illustrated by the experience of some Scottish chaplains who enlisted in the early days of the war. According to the Rev George Monro, who enlisted into the Regular Army from the Territorial Army Reserve of Officers as a chaplain and was called up in September 1939:

We received no training at all...I was fitted with a uniform by an Edinburgh tailor, then as a rookie I went to meet the Chaplain General and immediately removed my hat, only to be told that you do not remove your hat until ordered to do so...I was given a voucher and a ticket and sent to my first unit; my training was complete.²⁴⁶

The chaplain, like the doctor, were both professionally trained in their own field but they still had to discover how to exercise their professional skills in the strange environment of the Armed Forces.

On 1 September 1939 David Read, a Church of Scotland minister, received a telegram calling him up as a reserve chaplain and commanding him to report to Netley Hospital, near Southampton, to assume the responsibilities as chaplain to No. 11

General Hospital:

There I was, with no training whatever in a chaplain's duties, no inkling of what to do next, and a vague idea that sometime we would indeed embark for France.²⁴⁷

Eventually his unit did cross over to Le Havre where they were to spend the ensuing months of the "Phoney War". Read had serious doubts at this time whether he would have been better staying at home and following through a recent call to move to Greenbank Church in Edinburgh from his first parish of Coldstream.

Originally Read had little to do except attend to the needs of the few soldiers who ended up in his field hospital which was set up in the casino at Le Havre. Gradually he discovered a more fruitful ministry as reinforcements arrived to join the rapidly expanding British Expeditionary Force: "On Sundays I found myself in many strange places, often conducting six or more services for a curious mixture of men,

²⁴⁶ George Monro, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

²⁴⁷ D.H.C. Read, This Grace Given, (Michigan 1984), p.90.

from grizzled veterans to recruits as bewildered as I.”²⁴⁸ Clearly the fact that this Scottish minister had received no training on how to behave as a chaplain and did not know what was expected of him, must have enhanced his sense of bewilderment.

The Rev David Henderson was an Irish Presbyterian who volunteered for chaplaincy service in the Army in October 1939. Travelling over from Northern Ireland, he went to the Chaplains’ Headquarters but he was not given much help or advice as to what lay ahead:

The training we got was rather sparse. Along with another Irish minister we were handed our communion cases and told to go and join our units...that was our total training...We had no preparation at all for what was before us, except what we had learned in our parishes prior to enlistment.²⁴⁹

Undoubtedly there were some ministers who had a rudimentary knowledge of the Army due to school Cadet Forces, University Officer Training Corps or Territorial Army service, but many like the Rev Joe Ritchie had no real idea what they were letting themselves in for:

We were given no training as soldiers, there was no drill...there was however one elderly Padre and all I can remember of his counsel to us was if you criticise and condemn others you better get out...you have got to be prepared to meet all kinds of men without criticism and to accept them.²⁵⁰

Ritchie regarded this as good advice but when he reached his unit of attachment he was immediately taken aback by “the very rough language of the men, but after a while I knew that the officers were just as rough, they condemned the men for their

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p.91.

²⁴⁹ David Henderson, Taped interview, Glen Isla, 7 July 1994.

²⁵⁰ Joe Ritchie, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Jan 1994.

immorality but they were just as bad.”²⁵¹ Ritchie felt certain, however, that his parish experience prior to joining up stood him in good stead in his war service.

James Matheson, who would later be a Moderator of the Church of Scotland, was ordained and inducted originally as a Free Church minister in Caithness in September 1936. In early 1940 he decided to offer himself as a chaplain. However as Presbyterian vacancies to the Army were held by the Church of Scotland, he applied to their Chaplain's Committee and was duly accepted. He was interviewed in Edinburgh by the then Deputy Assistant Chaplain General (DACG), the senior Army Chaplain in Scotland, but again received little more than some good advice:

The only training I got was to preach short sermons and that was about it! I didn't even know how to salute. I was given a warrant for the train, a uniform and a posting order to an English anti-tank unit stationed in Arbroath...I had absolutely no idea of the Army because I had never been in the OTC, TA or anything.²⁵²

Not all Scottish chaplains were so ill prepared for Army life. Both the Rev Ronald Selby Wright and the Rev Murdo Ewen Macdonald had a degree of military experience prior to the 1939-45 war. As Selby Wright recalled in a BBC radio interview in 1992, he had joined the Territorial Army as a chaplain in 1938:

I became a Territorial chaplain in 1938 to the Edinburgh Battalion which was the 7th/9th Royal Scots. It was the old Dandy Ninth...In the late summer of 1938 we went to camp in Strathpeffer, while waiting for the war to start. When war was declared I naturally went with them and stayed with them until 1942 when I was seconded to the BBC.²⁵³

When asked by the author in 1993 whether or not he had been trained as a military chaplain Selby Wright replied: “we just acted as a minister would with a

²⁵¹Ibid.

²⁵² James Matheson, Taped interview, Skye, 13 June 1994.

²⁵³ Ronald Selby Wright, “The Radio Padre”, BBC Radio 4, 8 Nov 1992.

congregation. The congregation was the 7th/9th Royal Scots. There was no special training for it at all...we were like a family.”²⁵⁴

Murdo Ewen Macdonald left his Church of Scotland congregation at Portree on the Isle of Skye to become a chaplain in April 1940. During his military service he attended the occasional chaplains conference and gathering but he had no formal training except St Andrews University OTC, where in his student days he picked up some military knowledge. “I was commissioned chaplain 4th class and ordered to report to the depot, the headquarters of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in Inverness. I felt like Abraham of old leaving Ur of the Chaldees to face an uncertain future.”²⁵⁵ As war preparations gathered momentum the need for formal training and to prepare chaplains for their work become a priority. A school for basic training was therefore established, initially at Chester, in June 1940.

Prior to June 1940 Scottish ministers who enlisted in the Army as chaplains found themselves to be no better prepared for what lay ahead than had their predecessors during World War One. The Royal Army Chaplains' Department had not yet organized for itself a specialist training center or depot. It was only when the requirement for more chaplains for the Army began to increase that plans were finally put into action to open a specialist chaplains training school. The benefit of having a trained rather than an untrained chaplain was obvious. He was better prepared for what was expected of him and he could more easily and more quickly begin to exercise his ministry to the men and women in the Army.

The Scottish chaplains who enlisted into the Regular forces prior to June 1940 were not given any formal basic training. Some as we have already seen, like Selby

²⁵⁴ Ronald Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

²⁵⁵ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Padre Mac: The Man from Harris, (Stornaway 1993), p.75.

Wright and Murdo Ewen Macdonald, had either Territorial Army or University Officer Training Corps backgrounds and experience. Others like Read felt initial anxiety and bewilderment as to what was required of an Army padre in wartime.

BASIC TRAINING.

Although the United Kingdom officially declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, there was a period of relative calm as far as Great Britain was concerned during the later part of 1939 and the early part of 1940. Commonly known as the “phoney war” this period came to an abrupt end in the spring of 1940, first with the German invasion of Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940 and then on 10 May 1940, with the German invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. In May Chamberlain was replaced by Churchill and Italy entered the war on the side of Germany. As hostilities developed, Marshal Petain accepted a humiliating defeat as French defences crumbled before the German advance and the allied forces were forced to withdraw from the Continent at Dunkirk in June 1940.

It was also in June 1940 that the Rev Stanley Astbury, an M.C. veteran of the First War and priest of the Church of England, was appointed as Commandant of the Chaplains’ Department Training Centre based in Chester. The aim of this centre was to establish a level of training for all new in-take chaplains that would prepare them for the tasks and duties that lay ahead. The chaplains’ school remained in Chester until October 1942 when it moved to Tidworth.

The RACHD training centre offered courses for chaplains of all denominations except Roman Catholics. (The Roman Catholic Church decided to remain independent of all centralised training that was not denominationally based.) By the end of the

fortnight the recruits were much more confident in using military abbreviations and language. They had heard from a Regimental Sergeant Major a lecture on 'The Chaplain and the RSM'. A Psychiatrist had told them about 'The mind of the Soldier'. Experts had spoken to them about the Army's provision for education, medical cover and welfare. They had heard about sexual problems in the Army, about dress, military law and discipline. Experienced chaplains had lectured to them on all aspects of a chaplains duties.²⁵⁶ How did the Scottish chaplains respond to this training programme?

In early 1942 the Rev J.K.S. Reid left his Church of Scotland congregation of Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh, and went to Chester for chaplaincy training. "We were told," he later recalled, "how the Army worked and how chaplains were meant to conduct themselves. I think it was helpful. It was worthwhile having, because to go straight from parish life without having any experience of the Army or any kind of introductory course would have been rather wasteful."²⁵⁷ The basic training course that Reid attended was an ecumenical gathering, despite the fact that there were not any Roman Catholics present. It was, however, a course dominated by the Church of England:

There was an Anglican bias but we took a strong but amicable stance against it. We recognised each other as different and we were quite prepared to work together...we had some very active theological debate...as all volunteers we had no problem over whether the war was justified.²⁵⁸

Reid had previously had school cadet (CCF) experience which he found helpful.

The Rev Tommy Nicol began his Second World War service as a Platoon Commander in the 1st Battalion The Black Watch just before Christmas 1940. He had

²⁵⁶ R Lascelles, "School for Padres", *Soldier Magazine*, Vol.4, No. 1., (Mar 1948), p.26-28.

²⁵⁷ J.K.S. Reid, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

given up his theological studies at Aberdeen University in order to enlist, but was eventually tracked down by the Senior Chaplain Scottish Command and asked to return to University where he finished his theological training before being ordained and once again volunteering to enlist, this time into the Royal Army Chaplains' Department.

In early 1942 Nicol found himself posted to the chaplains' school at Chester:

I was glad to be sent to the chaplains school at Chester for my commissioning course. The others on the course were all Anglicans except for a Methodist, none of them having had any connection with the Army before...they picked my brains about the Army and I picked theirs about the work of the pastor. With hindsight I should have told them that they would learn their trade as chaplains at the hands of an understanding and tolerant soldiery, and be accepted as one of them in a way that does not seem to happen in a parish.²⁵⁹

In his memoirs Nicol goes on to say:

It took me some time, after joining a Battalion, to snap out of a rather defensive attitude and to realise that the Army's attitude to the chaplain [certainly the Scottish part of the Army] was one of complete acceptance and gratitude for the presence of the Church in the midst.²⁶⁰

In January 1942 Tommy Nicol was not yet 25 years old when he began his chaplains training course at Chester. "We had a little Toc H type chapel where Canon Ronald Sinclair gave devotional talks," Nicol later recalled:

I remember being impressed by them and particularly by his use of Studdert Kennedy's method of prayer, which I have used a lot since both personally and teaching soldiers.²⁶¹

Over fifty years later, Nicol published the following account of Studdert Kennedy's method of prayer:

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ T.J.T. Nicol, Ordinary Chaplain, unpublished memoir, p.19.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.20.

²⁶¹ T.J.T. Nicol, Taped interview, Comrie, 17 Dec 1993.

Woodbine Willie's Method of Prayer

Soldiers, like any other group of people living cheek to jowl, have very little privacy. So how can they find the conditions which will give them the detachment necessary for prayer? "Woodbine Willie", the nickname for Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, an Anglican chaplain of the First World War, who handed out Woodbine cigarettes to soldiers as he went among them through the trenches, had an answer. He devised a method of prayer for the soldiers to use:

1. Wherever you are (so long as it doesn't interfere with duty!) remember a favourite room or place. Think of all that is familiar there. Imagine yourself back there.

2. Gradually fill the secret place with pictures: the central figure in every picture is Jesus: playing with children; with his family; healing the sick; on the cross; walking with the two on the road to Emmaus; with doubting Thomas. Concentrate on one picture at a time.

3. The more we know our New Testament the larger the picture gallery can become, and so the wider our scope for prayer - bringing others to Jesus and believing in his power to help.

4. No words are needed, no church or holy place, other than in the mind.²⁶²

Another Church of Scotland minister who benefited immensely from the course at Chester was the Rev A.I. Dunlop. There were sixteen chaplains on his course, including six Anglicans, one Baptist, four Methodists and four other ministers from the Church of Scotland. During his training Dunlop kept a notebook and diary in which he recorded with meticulous care his observations and reflections during his time at the chaplains' school from 29 August to 11 September 1942.²⁶³

The course began on Sunday 30 August 1942 with a general discussion on the place of the chaplain in the unit. The course instructor stressed the importance of mixing with both officers and men: "You cannot get away from your congregation because you live with them." He compared the relationship to that of "Jesus and the Apostles."

²⁶² T.J.T. Nicol, Life and Work, (June 1994).

²⁶³ A.I. Dunlop, War Diary, held in the personal papers of the Rev A. I. Dunlop.

As chaplains they were officers and lived in the officer's mess. They were encouraged not to be wary of that position, however, because they would seldom be the youngest or the least senior officers in the mess. (Chaplains began their commissioned service wearing the rank of Captain.) Also they would probably have an educational advantage over their fellow officers.

A note of warning, however, was issued to these student chaplains in regard to gambling, drinking and the use of foul language: "Find your position first...don't be prudish...be strict with self." But equally there was a note of encouragement: "expect a good reception in the unit...chaplains are valued. There is much goodwill also...The officers are key men...much depends upon them...but spare time for the men and the younger officers."²⁶⁴ In the First World War some chaplains had been criticised for spending too much time in the company of the officer corps and not enough time with the men. The new chaplains in 1942 were therefore encouraged to divide their time equally among all ranks and to stand up for what they believed to be right. "Religion is a popular subject of conversation...but it pays to make it clear what we stand for...you are a Minister of the Gospel," Dunlop noted in his training notebook.²⁶⁵

The next class that Dunlop appears to have attended was a history lesson on the origins of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. This in turn led to a lesson on the organisation and administration of the chaplain in the military formation called the division. The chain of command through which the chaplain would be administered was via the senior chaplain at command; then the Assistant Chaplain General and finally the Chaplain General. The starting pay would be 15 shillings and 4 pence per day. This administration session went on to explain that as a soldier "you have no right

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

to leave as it is always a privilege." A chaplain, like everyone else in the Army, could not demand leave if service life dictated otherwise.

The instruction on pay and administration of chaplains during the 1939-45 war ended with a few remarks on "money if killed." The widow of a chaplain of the 4th class (Captain) who was killed on service would receive "one hundred pounds per annum." If however the chaplain was killed in action or died of wounds, an additional "gratuity of two hundred pounds would be paid." Offspring received "thirty pounds per annum per child under eighteen years." (Of the 3,000 chaplains who served with the forces during the 1939-45 War, no less than ninety-six would be killed or died of wounds on active service.)²⁶⁶

The next period of instruction, Dunlop recorded, was a lecture on the "Mentality of the Soldier." Here a Captain Coulson discussed the presentation of the Christian religion in the Army in war-time. He began by observing how in his opinion "faith was going, values disintegrating and problems arising...." He reinforced the need to "go to the masses," to try to understand their problems and to be readily accessible to all the men:

Try to understand something of their state of mind, especially the more mature people now being called up and who are not so fit...many will be homesick, sad even. Some will feel a sense of loss having been accustomed to authority and love...now they have little choice. Their life is completely regimented.²⁶⁷

The recruit chaplains at Chester were told that in any unit they should make every effort to befriend two people: The Commanding Officer (C.O.) and the Medical Officer (M.O.). It was important to bear in mind that a chaplain's job was facilitated or otherwise by the Commanding Officer, who could stop the chaplain exercising his

²⁶⁶ J. Smyth, *In This Sign Conquer*, (London 1968), p.220.

²⁶⁷ Dunlop, *War Diary*.

ministry or working amongst the men of his battalion, because “individually he is responsible for the whole unit.” The doctor and the chaplain work very closely together in war-time. Between them they care for the body and soul of the whole unit. A soldier who comes down with venereal disease will go to the M.O. but he “is not normally concerned with the moral side but rather with the physical side.” As far as the Army is concerned, “a man not having taken precautions (in sexual relations) which the Army provides, is liable to the same punishment as a man who inflicts a wound on himself.” It was the chaplains job to defend the moral high ground in all situations.

All new intake chaplains were given an explanation of the highly complex subject of “Military law.” Undoubtedly it was felt necessary that all chaplains should know what was and what was not lawful under the Manual of Military Law, in the hope that they would spot any incidents of ill treatment and also be wary enough not to be tricked by the more street-wise of soldiers.

Military law, which was based upon English rather than Scots law, was defined as “those extra obligations which a soldier must undertake in order that the Army may function efficiently.” It was contained in the Manual of Military Law which was divided into four parts:

- (a.) War and the usages of war on land.
- (b.) The Army Act.
- (c.) Rules of procedure.
- (d.) Specimen charges.

In war, absence is replaced by the more serious charge of desertion and eighty per cent of all crimes in 1942 related to absence of one kind or another. The chaplains were reminded that caring for the man in the guardroom was part of their function, but they were warned against allowing themselves to be a channel for all complaints:

“Crime is seen in a different way from civilian life. Any kind of offence is a crime in the Army.”²⁶⁸

Formal instructional sessions on the chaplain’s work at Chester were combined with a basic course of practical map reading. This would prove to be extremely valuable for many chaplains as they moved about the battle-field independently of other troops.

The remainder of the chaplaincy training course which Dunlop attended dealt with moral and pastoral care and how to minister in the military environment. The section on moral welfare was led by the Rev John Morrell, Secretary of the Moral Welfare Council in London. He began by stating that there was a great opportunity before the Church. It was a situation that required both sympathy and understanding. He emphasised that the “task of Christian leadership was to show a way of holding the great and the good together.” The new padres were then given some creative ideas as to how they might cope with the stresses inevitable in military service.

One particular area of concern to the chaplains, Morrell maintained, was that of “promiscuity” amongst the men. They were especially concerned about “lads who have lived a clean life until coming into the services.” Morrell then went on to suggest reasons for such behaviour:

Firstly, background is the cause for much unlicensed behaviour. The conscript is in a new environment where consciously or unconsciously he is a new fellow. ‘The Parenthesis of Warfare’ causes the men to struggle against the idea that they can go back as they were to civil life. Secondly, promiscuity and bad behaviour was caused by “tension and monotony.”

“A man bored to tears,” Morrell explained, “who gets a letter from home that is lacking or unsatisfactory becomes irritated and some turn to dope as a way of

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

forgetting.” Concerns were also raised about how to deal pastorally with masturbation and homosexuality.²⁶⁹

Some of the best advice that was offered to the new in-take at the chaplain's course at Chester that Dunlop attended, was given by the Commandant Stanley Astbury. In the unit the chaplains were advised to get amongst the men in their work and in their leisure hours:

Go to the NAAFI²⁷⁰. There is a good deal of hanging about. It is a place to make contacts. You will always be welcomed in the NAAFI where the men relax. It gives the men an opportunity to learn what kind of person you are.²⁷¹

On welfare the chaplains were warned that many units have a dedicated welfare officer. It was seen to be prudent that the chaplain worked closely with these officers although this was not always going to be an easy task: “Welfare officers are rather jealous of the padre as the padre is the natural person for the soldier to come to.”²⁷² A soldier could visit the padre in complete confidence and speak to someone who was in the unit but at the same time independent of the normal chain of command. In one sense every officer was a welfare officer for his men. But the chaplains were also encouraged to be sensitive to the position of the younger subalterns, many of whom were in special need of support, both personally and in the exercise of their leadership responsibilities.

During his time at Chester, Dunlop struggled with the question: “What did the padre in his unit do each day?” Astbury offered some helpful advice:

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ The Navy, Army and Air Force Institute (NAAFI) was a government funded recreational facility that provided light refreshments and basic shopping facilities in most military bases.

²⁷¹ Dunlop, *War Diary*.

²⁷² Ibid.

Don't be last at breakfast. Don't read when everyone else is out at work. If you have nothing else to do, go and pick blackberries...As part of the unit, chaplains were expected to be in their workplace with everyone else...Find time for prayers and reading...Pray for your men in their work.²⁷³

Canon Frank Woods, another veteran of the 1914-18 War, lectured to the course on service overseas. He began by saying that operational duty abroad was different from service at home for two reasons: "One, because opportunities are greater because abroad the men are more receptive; and secondly because moral standards (quickly) go down." Any chaplain posted abroad needed to go out fully prepared to begin his ministry the moment the troop ship set sail. The journey to Egypt, Persia or India might be as long as eight or nine weeks. There was endless visiting to be done amid often difficult conditions:

Conditions below decks can be appalling. There are no portholes open so you cannot tell whether it is day or night. The men sleep in hammocks. The difference between officers and the men's accommodation is very noticeable aboard ship...the chief enemies on ship are drink and organised gambling.²⁷⁴

Once ashore the chaplains would be despatched to a base area or barracks where they were usually fairly well catered for. When the battle began the chaplain would move out with the Medical Officer to the Advanced Dressing Station (an active service first aid post.) If his units became part of the Continental Invading Force, the chaplain would be expected with everyone else to travel as light as possible, with a maximum thirty-five pounds to be carried. At Chester it was recommended that they also carry "communion set, robes, books etc."

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Canon Frank Woods, lecture, RChD College, Chester 1942, Dunlop War Diary.

Finally, Dunlop recalled that he and the other new chaplains were instructed on how to conduct their ministerial duties under war-time conditions. First came the Parade Service, described by Dunlop in his notebook as follows:

Parade Services:

In the main these are all denominations.

Hymns: Maximum of three. Good well known hymns and tunes.

Prayers: Not too many...pray for people at home.

Lesson: Read by Commanding Officer.

Sermon: Not too long.

National Anthem: First verse only.

If the service was a formal parade service the C.O. formally hands over to the chaplain and at the end of the service the chaplain would hand back the parade to the C.O. Overseas and with no robes on, the chaplain would put on his service dress cap and salute the C.O. indicating that the service had finished.

With regard to Holy Communion the new chaplains were warned that they were “ministering to people of widely varying backgrounds and that they should avoid extremes.” There was no place here for adhering only to a strict Presbyterian or Scottish tradition. However, the Scottish Free Church’s non-sacramental form of worship appears to have been widely appreciated.

Canon Sinclair also talked to his RACHD recruits about the chaplains’ responsibilities in hospitals and at burials. He said that in hospital work there were three groups of people for whom the padre was responsible. First, there were “the hospital staff and especially the doctors.” Sinclair maintained that there were two classes of doctor: “those sympathetic to the padre’s work, believing that the chaplain complemented their work. Sixty percent were like that.” There were also the

“materialists, who were suspicious of padres. They think they know everything.” They regarded the padre as a mere do-gooder.

The second group of people that the hospital padre cared for were the Sisters, Matrons and Orderlies. The Orderlies were “nearly all conscientious objectors”. New chaplains were cautioned against ignoring the Orderlies but were to treat them with respect and understanding. They were “neither soldiers nor civilians.” The final group were the patients. The major problem for an Army chaplain working in a hospital in war-time was that the majority of the patients he saw would be young, fit men, who had suddenly become casualties of war.

Those who died, of course, have to be buried. Chaplains were informed that in the Army there were two kinds of funeral service. First there was the military funeral at home where the coffin would be draped in a Union Jack and the last post and reveille would be played by a bugler at the graveside. The relatives at home had the right to reclaim the body of the deceased for a private burial. Overseas, however, a different situation prevailed.

Arrangements for funerals overseas in wartime depended upon the current military situation. In a base location a regular cemetery would be found and “the body, sewn into an Army blanket, would be carried down to the grave and buried as soon as possible. An informal funeral service would be held, usually at night, to which the dead man’s friends would try to come.”²⁷⁵

It was the chaplain’s responsibility to collect the man’s personal effects, go through his pockets and ensure that nothing which would cause distress at home, such as photographs, would be returned to relatives. The chaplain would also ensure that one of the two identification discs which all soldiers wore around the neck was

removed from the body and sent back with the man's effects. The remaining disc would permanently identify the deceased.

Prior to taking a funeral service the chaplains were instructed to record the "name, number, regiment, religion and date of burial". After the funeral service the grave site was to be marked: "the official way of marking a grave was to drive a peg into the ground with the name etc. on the underside. Alternatively particulars could be put in a bottle, tin or shellcase and buried with the body."

Funeral services often had to be held in the heat of battle. To give the dead a proper burial was important for the morale of the troops. Under battle conditions, "there was no time to bury the dead formally. Bodies were buried where they lay e.g. in a shell hole." The burial party would "get together into a large shell hole and the chaplain would say a few prayers, and do what he could to take effects, record details etc."²⁷⁶

The chaplains were instructed that it was their duty to write home to relatives of the deceased. They were encouraged to find out what they could about the dead and to say something "glowing and good" about the fallen. While telling no lies, it had to be a helpful letter for the families.

The Rev Ian Dunlop completed his course at the RChD Depot in Chester on 11 September 1942 and was posted to be a garrison chaplain in Edinburgh. His experiences thereafter and the value of this training course will be discussed in a later chapter.

The training course that Dunlop experienced was designed to prepare ordained clergy of a number of different denominations for their future ministry in the Army. It

²⁷⁵Dunlop, War Diary.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

was assumed that they all knew how to exercise a ministry of Word and Sacrament according to their own tradition. Not surprisingly, the course had an Anglican bias but it was by no means exclusively a Church of England course. It was the remit of the training staff at the chaplains' training depot to give these men an understanding of the Army system and their future role in it.

Time was spent educating them in what it meant to be an officer and how to behave in the officer's mess. They were cautioned against any form of over-indulgence, and instructed to set a moral example and to maintain the correct profile with both officers and men. The chaplain was given officer rank, but he was to be first and foremost a minister of the Gospel.

The new chaplains also had to be taught the standards and rules of procedure expected by the Army. They were explained the system of pay and allowances, military law and the relationship that the chaplain should cultivate with the Commanding Officer. Much time was spent discussing the special moral and pastoral problems of Army life. Some practical advice was given regarding the conduct of services, the care of the sick and the burial of the dead both at home and overseas. Overall, Dunlop felt that this was a worthwhile course that laid a firm foundation for his ministry as a war-time chaplain.

In October 1942 the Rev Frank Woods, later Archbishop of Sydney, became Commandant of the RChD depot. At the end of the year the school moved location to Tidworth where the old rectory was requisitioned. Here it remained for the rest of the war.

It was also in October 1942 that the 8th Army under Montgomery started its campaign at El Alamein with a series of successes that resulted in the complete defeat of the German and Italian forces in North Africa. These victories were followed by

landings in Sicily and on the Italian mainland. As the war intensified the need to recruit and to train chaplains became ever more important.

In 1942, after much soul-searching, the Rev Gillies MacNab, then Church of Scotland Minister of Glasgow Temple Church, enlisted as an Army chaplain. He was sent to train at the RACHD centre at Tidworth. Apart from the same lectures delivered at Chester, the students now encountered some battle inoculation using live ammunition. The course was mostly Anglican in tone. Later, MacNab recalled:

It wasn't offensive at that point, it became offensive a little later, when I was actually serving as a padre...when a senior Anglican clergyman more often played the part of the officer than that of the priest.²⁷⁷

The remarkable chaplaincy career of the Scottish minister, Fraser McLuskey, began in April 1943 at the training centre in Tidworth. "In the First World War," he later wrote, "Army chaplains were left to sink or swim, and received no preliminary training for their new job. This time was very different."²⁷⁸ There were twenty nine other "new boys" on McLuskey's course and as he recalled in his book Parachute

Padre:

It was a very efficient school. The adjutant, John Arthur, could hardly have been more helpful. With combatant experience in the First War, both as Battery Commander and as a pilot, and with experience as a chaplain in the second, he knew the Army from A. to Z....he expounded to us the way the Army walks and salutes, the nature of its various formations, the mysteries of official correspondence, the intricacies of gas drill, and other necessary pieces of information too numerous and in many cases, too tedious to recall. He set us on the soldiers' path, and gave us, best of all, his own example.²⁷⁹

On reflection McLuskey later wrote:

I shall always be grateful for this course and especially for the chance it gave of a mental and spiritual reorientation...It was a happy course...we had arrived wondering how on earth a minister of religion fitted into the fighting machine,

²⁷⁷ Gillies MacNab, Taped interview, Broughtyferry, 5 July 1994.

²⁷⁸ J.F. McLuskey, Parachute Padre, (London 1985), p.17ff.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

and in these two weeks the answer was given. We learned the opportunities the Army offers the padre, and the place it gives him in its trust and affection. We learned some at least of the pitfalls to avoid...we left Tidworth very much wiser and, most of us felt, very much better men.²⁸⁰

Overall McLuskey looked back with considerable affection to his early days as an Army chaplain: "The pain of those first weeks of separation from home; the awkwardness of those first salutes; the half-formed fears of what lay ahead; the eager anticipation of a new life and the chance to be there at the liberation of Europe or the East; the nostalgic longing for the work and life left behind..." Perhaps the whole experience of the Tidworth school for Army chaplains was well summed up in McLuskey's final remark, that it was "a kindly introduction to a very big job."²⁸¹

In May 1943 Robert Craig gave up his assistantship at St John's Church of Scotland parish in Perth and was ordained as an Army chaplain. His first assignment was to the RACHD depot at Tidworth. Frank Woods was still the Commandant and his second in command, or deputy, was a Methodist called Dr Beeb, another former First World War chaplain. Yet as Craig recalled later he did not feel that this course prepared him adequately for what lay ahead:

There were about thirty of us on the course. There was no preparation [on the course] to fit us for military action...it tended to concentrate upon superficialities like dress and uniform. Spiritually and religiously it was adequate...but there was no real preparation for what lay in front of us...we were non-combatants but we were pushed out on our own. We received no battle-field skills or training.²⁸²

The centre was run on Anglican lines. Although Woods was ecumenically minded, in 1943 there was "no shared Communion. But on the human level there was a

²⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.18-19.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p.20.

²⁸² Robert Craig, Taped interview, Falkland, 6 July 1994.

very good sense of equal service.”²⁸³ Unlike the chaplains of the Great War, the Second World War chaplains embarked upon their training in the full knowledge that they would be in uniform until the conflict was over, no matter how long that might be. In the 1914-18 War chaplains were engaged on short term temporary commissions. But according to Robert Craig who served in World War Two, “we were aware that we were in for the duration and that must have affected the ministry of people.”²⁸⁴

Craig was eventually posted to a unit that deployed to Normandy in June 1944. In France one of the first problems he faced was where the chaplain should base himself on the battlefield. Craig later reflected that his training had not taught him where he could be most usefully located in battle:

In action one was faced with the question how far forward or how far back should you be...it was a tricky question...we were told to be in the Regimental Aid Post with the Doctor, but forward of that were the Companies and Platoons actually fighting. Was our position there or with the Doctor? The M.O. was busy treating the wounded and we had no training to equip us to help out any further forward...I felt frustrated and felt that I didn't do as much as I should have done...I have sometimes wondered whether it was a combination of fear, cowardice even, and lack of military training to equip us to do more.²⁸⁵

On 1 January 1944 David Whiteford began the New Year in training as an Army chaplain at Tidworth. He had previously been assistant to the Rev Hugh Douglas in North Leith Church of Scotland Congregation in Edinburgh. When interviewed by the author in 1993, Whiteford spoke at length about the ecumenical nature of his chaplaincy training in the Army:

At Tidworth we were a mixed group, mostly Anglican. There were a few Methodists and United Board Chaplains; they were mostly curates or ministers of the English Free Church. I was the only Church of Scotland representative

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

on that course. It was a combined course...we worked together, we worshipped together, we studied together and we prayed together. It was my first experience of an ecumenical grouping to that degree. I had been to ecumenical conferences and in my student days at New College there was a great deal of discussion about inter-church relationship and about Christian unity...in 1943 these were very real issues that we were facing in times of war. What had been theory in my student days became a reality with chaplains who came from a tradition different from my own. Their traditions were as strange to me as my traditions were to them...our training was realistic about the realities of Army life and Army service.²⁸⁶

The spirit of ecumenism that was generated amongst war-time chaplains was felt by many: "the war itself brought ecumenical contacts and friendships to us all. One just had to live closer to one's neighbours in the RACHD (Roman Catholic; Church of England; Other Denominations including Jews) than one normally had the opportunity to do in civil life. For that, many chaplains will be thankful to the Department."²⁸⁷

Many chaplains, including those from Scotland, had to learn how to minister in an ecumenical setting. The soldiers they cared for came from a wide variety of religious backgrounds and from none. Some were steeped in the tradition of their childhood, be that high Anglican or low Calvinist. The padre had the job of being all things to all men. War often heightened the men's sense of religious awareness and they were often eager to be ministered to. There was therefore a great responsibility upon the chaplain to respond to this need. But it was not always easy, as Fraser McLuskey discovered in his first appointment after leaving the chaplain's training centre.

McLuskey was first posted not to a Scottish Regiment, as he might have expected, but to a job in South East Lincolnshire where he looked after a number of isolated units, in which he had men of every conceivable denomination to visit:

²⁸⁶ David Whiteford, Taped interview, Gillan, 29 Oct 1993.

²⁸⁷ Canon Bernard C. Pawley, "Ecumenical Reflection in the RACHD 1940-45", article, RACHD Journal, Vol.21, No. 108, (Nov 1967), pp.10-15.

I had no church. I was on the staff of a Headquarters but I took services with different units wherever and whenever I could...Without the support and warmth of a Regiment it was a lonely job...Here I learned what a soulless business it is being a chaplain on a strictly denominational basis to about fifty different units of every type and description scattered throughout one's district.²⁸⁸

Despite these frustrations it was McLuskey's experience that chaplains generally received a warm welcome from most units:

There was a welcome everywhere because you were a padre. You wore their uniform and shared their conditions and there were Scots everywhere but they were widely dispersed.²⁸⁹

McLuskey indeed found that:

In the Army the Church of Scotland was held in very high regard in the Church of England, and with a certain amount of respect. It was increasingly recognised that the Anglicans were the non-conformists north of the border and not the other way around.²⁹⁰

In 1942 Ronald Selby Wright became the Senior Chaplain of the Lowland

Division and met with chaplains of all denominations:

Most of them were senior to me in the Church but the Army made me Senior Chaplain and I had to do what I was told...the Romans [meaning Roman Catholic Chaplains] were awfully friendly, very easy. We had a very good Jesuit with us who regarded Army life and discipline as very much the same as living the Jesuit way.²⁹¹

When asked whether or not he had shared services with either his Anglican or Roman Catholic colleagues, Selby Wright replied: "No. We would share the same jeeps to take us places." When asked if they ever said their prayers together, he responded, "No, we didn't actually. We were too busy rushing about to be able to say

²⁸⁸ McLuskey, *Parachute Padre*, p.23.

²⁸⁹ J.F. McLuskey, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 15 Sep 1993.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Ronald Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

our prayers together. We were saying so many prayers outside at other places.”²⁹²

Evidently Selby Wright had little time or enthusiasm for the advancement of ecumenism in wartime.

Whenever a chaplain went to a new posting one of his first tasks was to secure a place for worship if one did not already exist. This caused some problems for Scottish chaplains who, when serving in England, were sometimes treated with grave derision by the local Church of England clergy. As Ian Dunlop records in his war diary, the chaplain had to make the best of any given situation:

Sunday 15 November 1942. Morton Hall Service in the open (no buildings available). Bells ringing (in nearby churches) to mark North African Victories.
Sunday 29 August 1943. Morning service in NAAFI. About 250 present. Combined CofE and Presbyterian service...Evening: went to CofE church, lovely evening service.²⁹³

It was not always an easy task planning services in the forces. Again Dunlop records in his diary:

19 October 1943. I may have trouble with the Church of England Officiating Chaplain to the Forces (OCF) in Otley: a bumptious Canon Williams.
20 October 1943. OCF Bettinson came this morning and saw all Church of England men. They are to go at 1100 hrs. each Sunday to Leathley Church.²⁹⁴

When the Army chaplains' training centre and depot moved to Tidworth it became more ecumenical but was still very much dominated by the Church of England. Some Scottish chaplains like MacNab were reluctant even to be in uniform and he later confessed that he did not make the most of the training on offer. Other Scots, like McLuskey appear to have thrived on the experience and found it to be a most useful and enjoyable time.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Dunlop, War Diary.

By the winter of 1943/44 many of the chaplains who passed through the chaplains training centre were immediately sent to operational units in the front line. A Scottish chaplain, Robert Craig, found himself with a Scottish regiment in France but felt very uneasy about his role. He felt totally unprepared for what was expected of him.

All chaplains quickly found that regardless of their own religious tradition they were now called to minister in a broad church and to make God real to those of all denominations and none. Some Scottish chaplains like McLuskey and Dunlop found that there were few Presbyterians in their first military parish and that they did not even have a church in which regularly to hold their Sunday service. The importance of the field service or a method of private devotion similar to that suggested by Studdert Kennedy and used by Nicol and others proved to be most helpful in the spiritual life of both chaplains and men.

Clearly no amount of training would prepare the chaplains of the Second World War for everything that they would encounter. What was required was a high degree of sanctified common sense and a fair amount of diplomacy. The Chaplains' Department, however, were constantly aware of the isolated conditions under which many of the men worked and therefore in time a programme of continuation training was introduced.

CONTINUATION TRAINING AND BATTLE INNOCULATION

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

By a combination of refresher courses, conferences, retreats and quiet days chaplains were nurtured in their war-time ministry. Short courses of up to five days were run in most theatres of war for chaplains “who have been in the thick of Army work for long periods.”²⁹⁵ These refresher courses took the form of a religious retreat in the morning, when devotional addresses and opportunities for quiet and meditation were possible. In the evening, there was a general discussion of experiences gained and methods of problem solving shared. It was generally felt that these courses were most helpful.

The need for a refresher course was certainly widely recognised by chaplains serving in the desert with the Eighth Army. According to an official Army publication of 1944, “Men get dry; drained of their stock of material; out of touch with all but the narrow life of the unit. They need time and quiet to review their work, restock their minds and let God Himself inspire them.”²⁹⁶

One Scottish minister who saw service with the Eighth Army was Stuart Loudon who was eventually captured at Tobruk on 20 June 1942. He privately expressed in his war diary how much he was in need of spiritual refreshment:

Thursday 24 July 1941. Beginning to feel the exhaustion of so many weeks (and months) of continuous hospital visiting...felt very dull at night, wondering when I'll see Helen [wife] and Michael [son] again.

Sunday 27 July 1941. Three services this morning: 9am in the cinema at Sidi Bishr, where I preached on 'Burden Bearing'...

Saturday 9 August 1941. Felt a lack of ideas and general weariness, when trying to begin my preparation this morning...Spoke to Reginald Bancroft about the terrific nervous strain of this life, both of us missing our homes very

²⁹⁵ P. Middleton Brunwell, The Army Chaplain, (London 1943), p.46.

²⁹⁶ Army Publication, A Summary of the experience in the field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains: The Chaplains of the Grand Assault, (In the Field January 1944), p.28.

much...a quiet evening in my room getting ready for Sunday and feeling desperately wearied to see my loved ones.²⁹⁷

Eighth Army chaplains were also advised that conferences, retreats and quiet days should never be omitted for long. There were ample opportunities to attend. The advice given was “simply fix a convenient map reference, bring rations and camp there for the day.”²⁹⁸ To pause, reflect and spend time with other clergy was of great benefit to many chaplains. As Loudon recorded:

Tuesday 2 September 1941. Attended a “Quiet Day”. Chaplains began to arrive at c.4.15, including the Rev Frank Woods [formerly at the RACHD Training Centre], who led the retreat...Evensong at 6pm (2 ridge tents for the church)...Compline and the first address at 7.45. After which silence was observed until Thursday morning...

Thursday 4 September 1941. 8 o'clock Holy Communion. Followed by a very talkative breakfast after 36 hours of silence.

Sunday 7 September 1941. [A rejuvenated padre Loudon] preached on the text; 1 Chronicles 19:13. “Be of good courage, and let us play the man for our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what seems good to him.”²⁹⁹

Elsewhere, chaplains' continuation training and rest periods continued to be run from 1941 onwards. In Italy in 1943 the course was attached to the Army Rest Camp for administrative purposes. Here a library, chapel and study facilities were provided. What was important about these courses was that they were regarded by the chaplain's military superiors as “training” rather than leave. According to an official Eighth Army publication of 1944, “These are matters of professional efficiency and not leave. The padres should be detailed to go, and relieved of the onus of asking for leave; or wondering where their duty lies. Their duty is to go and be refreshed.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ R.S. Loudon, War Diary, held in the RACHD Centre and Museum.

²⁹⁸ Army Publication by Eighth Army Chaplains, p.29.

²⁹⁹ Loudon, War Diary.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

On Saturday 7 November 1942 seven chaplains took the train from Egypt to Jerusalem to attend the first officially organised refresher course for chaplains from the western desert. They had been performing their ministry in various parts of the battle front during the grim struggle of October and early November 1942. They were met by the Assistant Chaplain General, Palestine, the Senior Chaplain to the Forces in Jerusalem and the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem.³⁰¹ This course was put together on the instruction of General Montgomery and designed for the chaplains to “discuss their problems and their work, to renew their studies, so hard to maintain in a desert place, to catch the inspiration to be gained from visiting places sacred to Christian men everywhere, and to re-consecrate themselves to their great task.”³⁰²

Chaplains’ training and rest centres were established on many of the main battle fronts in North Africa, Belgium and in Italy.³⁰³ When Selby Wright was Senior Chaplain in the 10th Indian Division, he ran an in-service training course for the chaplains in his division at Assisi, at which he invited T.F. Torrance to lecture. Torrance was then doing war service with the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation. “We did that twice at Assisi,” Selby Wright recalled, “Professor Torrance came once to talk...the whole idea was to get chaplains together to share their views and experiences...I called it an Ecclesiastical Exercise without Parishioners.”³⁰⁴

Back in England while training for active service, Ian Dunlop attended a chaplains’ training conference on 19-20 October 1943, which was held in York. Here Professor Jessop of Hull gave two lectures on conditions in Europe and the Major General commanding the 11th Armoured Division also addressed the chaplains.

³⁰¹ Chaplain’s Magazine Middle East, Vol. 1-2, 1943-45, p.8ff. Copy held in the Imperial War Museum, London.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Smyth, In this Sign Conquer, p.237.

According to the entry in Dunlop's War Diary this was an "exceedingly good" conference. Apart from regular conferences and chaplains gatherings, Dunlop also found himself taking part in military exercises designed to help prepare chaplains for the battlefield.

In November 1943 Dunlop found himself on a four-day exercise which was designed to improve the chaplains' ability to map read and to apply basic First Aid. On this particular exercise the part of the patient was taken by David Cairns, another Church of Scotland chaplain and later Professor at Aberdeen.³⁰⁵ By 1944 it was recognised that chaplains needed more practical training and battle inoculation experience.

It was the Rev J.R. Youens, later Chaplain General, who first noted this deficiency in chaplaincy training when he was appointed Senior Chaplain of the Second Army. Very few of his chaplains had much if any practical experience in field craft and he was convinced that this deficiency would be a serious handicap to those of them who would be serving with troops in action. Accordingly, a 'Battle School', run by the Army Headquarters Defence Company, came into being and a series of week-long courses were held, specifically for chaplains, lasting from February to the end of March 1944.³⁰⁶

This battle course for chaplains was held at Church Stowe, near Weedon in Northamptonshire, where the old vicarage and grounds had been requisitioned for the purpose. "An exceptionally tough assault course was erected within the grounds," writes J. Smith, "It contained all the ingredients of a battle-field and chaplains who

³⁰⁴ Ronald Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

³⁰⁵ Dunlop, War Diary.

³⁰⁶ Smyth, p.245.

were detailed to attend these courses were confronted with all the hazards of warfare.”³⁰⁷ It was meant to be in every sense “a baptism of fire.”

The Church of Scotland chaplain, George Monro, attended this battle course for chaplains:

The course was made up of divisional chaplains training for Normandy...I was surprised at how unathletic some of the others were...some were rather reluctant...it was a rigorous physical training course.³⁰⁸

Ian Dunlop, also a Scottish chaplain in the Second Army, was sent to the Church Stowe Battle School between Monday 20 and Friday 24 March 1944. His war-diary records those as a very challenging few days:

The battle course ended up with a three and a half mile run and jump into the river from an eight foot high ramp, at the end of the assault course...the course included, films, services, prayers, a night compass march, digging slit trenches, mine prodding and lifting, climbing walls and moving in cover and in built up areas. We also practiced carrying wounded under live fire, and movement under fire by day and night....³⁰⁹

By all accounts this was a most rigorous training course but it was a vital introduction to battle conditions and, according to those who underwent similar training elsewhere, it was second to none. “For the 200 chaplains who attended this course,” remarked Smyth in his book on the history of the Chaplains’ Department, “much spiritual as well as practical encouragement was received in preparation for the future invasion of Europe.”³¹⁰

The programme of one to five day courses that began in 1941 to provide further specialist training, refreshment and fellowship for the brotherhood of chaplains

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ George Monro, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

³⁰⁹ Dunlop, War Diary.

³¹⁰ Smyth, p.247.

proved to be most successful and appreciated. It was the experience of those chaplains, including a number of Scots who served with the Eighth Army, that life in the forces could be a most claustrophobic and spiritually draining way of life. They had little privacy. Chaplains like everyone else were frightened, home-sick and tired. Yet the chaplains were always on duty for others to come and share their concerns and to seek both pastoral and spiritual solace. Some chaplains reached the point of saturation and experienced compassion fatigue; a few even lost their way in their spiritual life and allowed their moral standards to slip.

It was the intention of the chaplains conferences, retreats and rest days to provide not only training and encouragement but also to allow fellow ministers and priests time to reflect and to share their experiences with like-minded colleagues. It is important to note that these days were given official sanction as training and not as leave. Senior officers, including General Montgomery, welcomed these opportunities for chaplains to meet together and to get away from their daily routine and duties. It was the Senior chaplain's responsibility to arrange the days training and sometimes highly respected and senior people were invited to address the chaplains. But it was their fellowship one with another that was seen to be most useful.

It was a radical innovation when Youens, the Senior Chaplain Second Army, decided in February and March 1944 to organise week-long battle simulation exercises for his chaplains. The course was necessarily demanding, arduous and physically challenging, but this form of training was intended as a way of drawing the chaplains closer together prior to them deploying for the front line.

SPECIALIST TRAINING

As the war developed the Chaplain General and his staff recognised that chaplains would have to be trained to a sufficiently high level to enable them to accompany the fighting elements into battle, without endangering themselves or others. The scope of the Army chaplain on active service had enlarged immeasurably since the early days of the First World War, when chaplains had not been allowed to conduct a ministry in the front line. Many First World War ministers and priests, however, had ignored this advice and had spent valuable hours with the men in the forward trenches. According to Middleton Brumwell, “it mitigated against the influence of the chaplain if he did not share the dangers of the men and confined his activities to times when they came out of the line. Besides, the presence of the chaplain in the line with the men was a source of inspiration and good cheer.”³¹¹ During the 1939-45 War the chaplains had far greater freedom of movement and many sought every opportunity to get to the front line and to stand alongside those who were actually doing the fighting.

In late 1941 when volunteers were being sought to form an Airborne Brigade a trawl was made of the Chaplains’ Department to find men who would undertake the arduous and dangerous business of parachute training. Early in 1942 the Scottish chaplain, Murdo Ewen MacDonald, responded to an open letter inviting chaplains to volunteer for specialist parachute training. MacDonald had been an Army chaplain since April 1940 and had found this ministry to be a “liberating experience.”³¹² He had begun his service as chaplain to the 4th Battalion of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders and served with them initially in the Dutch West Indies helping to guard

³¹¹ P. Middleton Brumwell, p.37.

³¹² MacDonald, Padre Mac The Man from Harris, p.81.

vital oil installations. As a native Gaelic-speaker, MacDonald was readily accepted by this battalion which included many Gaelic speakers from the Western Isles of Scotland.

On his return from the West Indies, MacDonald volunteered for parachute training. About that decision he later remarked: "I was immediately attracted. If I were to indulge in self-analysis, I reckon I had a sense of guilt that while the Battle of Britain was being waged I lived in luxury in a tropical climate, swimming in warm lagoons many miles away from danger."³¹³ Despite this degree of self-denial, MacDonald was sorry to leave the Cameron Highlanders and they were sorry to see him go: "To leave the 4th Camerons was a painful wrench. I was very fond of the Battalion and surprisingly they were fond of me. I joined the Paras at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, where the ground training took place."³¹⁴

All Army volunteers, including chaplains, who sought to train as parachutists were first put through a demanding period of pre-parachute ground training known as "P Company." This hard physical course was designed to test the individual's physical fitness, motivation, courage and stamina, for life in the airborne forces. "The training was gruelling in the extreme," recalled MacDonald:

We were made to run distances ranging from two to ten miles. There were assault courses which could only be described as cruel...we had to wade through moats, the water up to our armpits, holding our rifles above our heads. We had to crawl on our bellies under coils of barbed wire with live bullets zinging over our heads. There were a few fatal casualties....³¹⁵

All potential parachutists had to pass a number of physical tests before being subjected to parachute aptitude assessment. MacDonald appears to have coped fairly well on his pre-para training: "I was fit but it was tough...fewer than 45% of all

³¹³ Ibid., p.81.

³¹⁴ Ibid., pp.81-82.

volunteers actually made it to the end of the course.”³¹⁶ There were other chaplains on this course and all candidates, officers and men, trained together:

There was great camaraderie between officers and men...the bond between these men could be analysed as stemming from the perpetual danger that created this bond. In the Infantry proper there was a distance between the officers and the men, but not in the paras. The danger of parachuting was equally distributed [the same risks were shared by all]...It was a frightening yet exhilarating process...that created a terrific and unique bond.³¹⁷

This bond that MacDonald remembered so warmly would be vitally important in his ministry amongst the airborne soldiers.

Having successfully passed P Company, Parachute Regiment recruits moved to Ringway airport outside Manchester to be trained how to parachute:

At Ringway, our first two jumps were made from a balloon, hydraulically levered to a height of 800 feet...with mounting terror I looked down, all the minor anxieties of my life evaporated into the thin morning air...would I have the guts to jump the moment I heard the order ‘GO’....³¹⁸

After successfully completing two balloon jumps and a further five jumps from a Whitley bomber, MacDonald was awarded his much-coveted parachute wings and was posted as chaplain to the Parachute Brigade now being formed in early November 1942 in preparation to deploy to North Africa. His parachutist wings meant more to his soldiers than the denomination or church to which he belonged: “I was one of them.”³¹⁹

Another Scottish chaplain, J.K.S. Reid, joined the Chaplains’ Department in 1942 and had a successful first posting to a signals training unit in Huddersfield. His senior chaplain was a canon from Hereford with whom he worked very well. Reid

³¹⁵Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

recalled that as a Church of Scotland minister he had great freedom and held a regular diet of worship. Occasionally he shared services with his Anglican colleague but generally he looked after the non-Anglicans who passed through the signals training centre. Reid believed that he had a completely free hand in his pastoral work. Some of the men had great problems being absent from home, often for the first time. Moral laxity was a recurrent problem, but Reid expected little better from the young soldiers in the Army. "Men living together as men, act as men, but it didn't strike me as over exaggerated, it was what one really might have expected,"³²⁰ remarked Reid when interviewed by the author in 1994.

It was while serving at Huddersfield that Reid received the letter asking for volunteers for the Parachute Regiment. He immediately decided to put his name forward:

I didn't want to be like the chaplains in the air force who are left behind when the real work was being done...I discovered that this was not the case. In the paras you are at one with the men...we were trained together, we dropped together and we fought together...every parachute chaplain would endorse how extraordinary important the relationship is amongst paratroopers and their chaplains...to be doing this fairly dangerous thing together created an immense bond, quite irrepressible in action.³²¹

Of his pre-parachute training Reid remembered a "reluctance to GO." He received no preferential treatment as a chaplain. All were equal. The number of actual casualties was small: "fear was more in the mind than in reality."³²² He found that Church interest had to be stimulated in the Parachute Regiment, but "the presence of the Church amongst them (in the shape of the chaplain) was something to be reckoned

³²⁰ J.K.S. Reid, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

with.”³²³ In time Reid was posted to the Middle East where eventually he became chaplain to the 5th Parachute Battalion.

It was after a most frustrating period as a district chaplain in Lincolnshire that Fraser McLuskey readily accepted the invitation to volunteer for specialist training with the Parachute Regiment. He was aged 29 years when he joined four other ministers of religion (two Roman Catholics, one Church of England and one other minister of the Church of Scotland, namely the Rev D.H. Whiteford) on the pre-parachute selection course at the Depot and School for Airborne Forces at Hardwick Camp, near Chesterfield. From the outset McLuskey was certain that “parachuting, at least, need hardly be done on a denominational basis...as all bow to gravity and fall with equal force.”³²⁴

To some extent McLuskey regarded the opportunity to volunteer for special training as a way of escaping the somewhat soulless and dislocated existence he had in his first posting as a district chaplain. But more importantly he felt that it was a challenge: “I was young and fit enough to volunteer and just as well able as a younger man for the course.”³²⁵ The clergy on this course had to pass all the same statutory tests as the men, but McLuskey believed that the instructors kept a “kindly eye” upon the men from the Church:

There was no distinction, you did everything the same way and if you were not regarded at the end as being ‘fit to drop’ you would not have been allowed to continue. But the fact that you were a padre made a difference, even though they expected the same standards.”³²⁶

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ McLuskey, *Parachute Padre*, p.25.

³²⁵ J.F. McLuskey, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 15 Sep 1993.

³²⁶ Ibid.

McLuskey also experienced that special bond between chaplain and men within the airborne forces:

It arose from the experience of parachuting, with all the thrill, danger and risk and that certainly united chaplain and men very quickly...Belief in God is heightened in the face of danger and also by the common life that soldiers led together. The men respected the chaplain who was obviously prepared to go where they go and not stay behind. To drop with them and to remain with them...after the war some ministers found that congregations did not want them because they had been away from home and therefore out of touch...yet the Army chaplain in peace or war has an opportunity which really no civilian can get, namely to be with the very people who never come near the Church; the great unchurched.³²⁷

Many Army chaplains' during the war often ministered in lonely religious situations amongst the unchurched. In McLuskey's experience soldiers were open to religious persuasion. "When I was with the SAS," McLuskey wrote, "I was dealing with men most of whom had no fixed church connection, but hardly any of them were unresponsive to opportunities to worship together, in informal and unusual ways."³²⁸

After nearly two weeks of hard physical and synthetic training, all five chaplains on Fraser McLuskey's pre-para course passed and were sent to do continuation training with the Royal Air Force at RAF Ringwood, where the real business of parachuting began. For the next ten to fourteen days RAF Parachute Instructors prepared the candidates both physically and psychologically for the experience of jumping from a balloon or an aircraft. David Whiteford, another Scottish volunteer chaplain, was badly injured on his second drop and had to withdraw from any further parachuting.

Of his first parachute jump McLuskey later wrote, "I was very, very scared; not so much of an accident happening, because I had thought that all out, and knew I was

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

prepared to take the risk. I was scared of myself, afraid of being a coward; more afraid of letting myself and everyone else down than of being killed....”³²⁹ “It was,” he added, “certainly prayer and the power God supplied in response which enabled me to meet the demands of the course.”³³⁰ Eight jumps later, including a night drop, McLuskey was awarded his parachute wings and the red beret of the Parachute Regiment. His next posting was as chaplain to the 1st Special Air Service Regiment (SAS), a war-time formation that few people at the time had ever heard about. A further period of intensive training in Scotland followed until on 21 June 1944 McLuskey parachuted into enemy-occupied France with the members of “A” Squadron of the 1st SAS Regiment.

Chaplains are never “specialist” ministers. They may, however, minister in a “special” setting. This was certainly true of the ministers and priests who volunteered to serve as Army chaplains during the Second World War. All chaplains needed to be trained for the job they were expected to do. More importantly, chaplains needed specialist training that was different from the rest of the officer corps, due to their average age, physical condition and distinctive role.

The Church of Scotland chaplain, the Rev Murdo Ewen MacDonald, volunteered for service in the parachute brigade because he wanted to contribute something more to the war effort and not to sit out his time in safety. Another Scot, the Rev J.K.S. Reid, put his name forward as a way of proving himself and to open new channels of ministry by getting alongside the men in a very practical way. Finally, the Rev Fraser McLuskey, saw the parachute regiment as a way of escaping the more sedentary and boring routine that he experienced on his first posting.

³²⁹ McLuskey, *Parachute Padre*, p.35.

³³⁰ McLuskey, *The Cloud and the Fire*, (Durham 1993), p.65.

It is significant that the chaplains had to pass the same statutory tests as all other potential paratroopers. This was widely recognised as a most demanding test of physical fitness and courage. Because the chaplains were on an equal footing with the men, they shared in the special bond amongst the special forces. A chaplain who had passed P company and who was trained to jump into a battlefield and to stay with the men, gained access to the men in a way that other chaplains could not.

THE CHAPLAIN AS TRAINER

It was the experience of Scottish chaplains in the First World War that they had two main functions associated with their office. The first was distinctly religious: the conduct of services and the due administration of sacraments. In addition they were expected to care for the wounded, to bury the dead and to correspond with the relatives of the deceased. Secondly, the remainder of their time was spent in a welfare role and this often brought with it “the relentless call for organised sport and the running of the inevitable canteen.”³³¹ Some chaplains, however, found time to organise discussion groups or Bible studies but as one Scottish chaplain observed from his 1914-18 War experience:

Out of a Battalion of 800 officers and men, only twelve attended a voluntary meeting on Mark's Gospel; one hundred and twenty, including 10 officers, attended the first of a six-part series on the history of the French Republic, while 98% of the Battalion attended a film night. [From this Blair deduced that] Out of the 800 men:
1.5% were interested in religion.
15% were interested in culture.
98% were interested in entertainment.³³²

³³¹ D. Blair, “Leaves from the journal of a Scottish Padre in the First World War,” article, RChD Journal, Vol.8, No. 57, (June 1954), pp.44-50.

³³² *Ibid.*, p.49.

In an article for the Royal Army Chaplains Department Journal in 1954, Blair remarked however that, “no chaplain, in his right senses, would dream of regarding such analysis as an infallible reflection of the authentic mental and spiritual outlook of the typical Scots battalion....”³³³

During the Second World War it was evident that many officers and men believed that the chaplain had not only a religious function but also a welfare role. In the Chaplains’ Department it was increasingly felt that more opportunities needed to be created to allow the chaplain greater input to the daily life and training of the regiments.

In a book published in 1941, entitled Front Line Religion, the Scottish Chaplain Ronald Selby Wright wrote:

Too often, perhaps, we are inclined, even from the best motives to be ‘decent blokes’, who run concerts, and look after canteens, and give out socks and scarves, all things to all men, and when you boil it down perhaps not very much to many, though acting sometimes in an oasis of humanity in a some not too human situation. There is a danger lest we misplace the emphasis; for a Padre is first a servant of God and from that all else must follow. His first duty is to make God real to men, and to do that God must be real to him...the Padre's best sermon must be himself.³³⁴

Selby Wright saw that the time had come for chaplains to take more of a Christian stand and to challenge the men and women of the Army with the things of the faith. In the spring of 1942, an Anglican chaplain, the Rev J.J.A. Hodgins, organised the first formal scheme of religious education, or chaplaincy training periods, known as the “Padre's Hours”. This was done with the support of Major General “Boy” Browning who was then commanding the Airborne Division.

³³³ Ibid., p.49.

³³⁴ R. Selby Wright, Front Line Religion, (London 1941), p.10.

The basis of this scheme was that each week a group of soldiers should be given time from their training programme to meet with the padre, who would present a short talk on a religious or moral topic and then open it up for discussion. It was significant that these group sessions were included in the normal working day and not as an out of hours recreational activity. The fact that the chaplain was allowed precious training time to talk with the men reflected the importance with which commanders viewed these sessions.

Ideally the padre would meet the men in a small and relaxed setting, perhaps in the canteen over a cup of tea. Here the men were encouraged to speak absolutely frankly; to criticise if they wanted to and to get things off their chests. It was never the intention that the Padre's hour should become a form of "denominational propaganda" nor was it intended to be the vehicle for "pep talks to boost morale."³³⁵ It gave the chaplain an opportunity to answer any questions the men may have had and to allow them to share their concerns and their fears together. It also gave the chaplain the chance to present a Christian perspective on life. Nevertheless, the success or otherwise of the Padre's Hour depended very much upon the feeling amongst the men at the time and the ability of the chaplain to get them talking.

Soon the Padre's Hour was introduced throughout the Army, where it was met with guarded approval. It was seen to be important in many units that the soldiers could vent their true feelings and voice objections to someone who was in the system but not in a supervisory capacity. Any serious grievances could be addressed by the chaplain on the soldiers' behalf to the Commanding Officer who would decide if remedial action was necessary. Many commanders also recognised the value of allowing the men an opportunity to discuss important matters of faith and eternity at a

time when they were preparing to face battle and when many had already lost friends and family members.

The Padre's Hour was welcomed by most of the padres who led the sessions. In an interview with Selby Wright, the Rev James Wood, the Scottish chaplain who had replaced Selby Wright as chaplain to the 7th/9th Royal Scots, remarked how the two-way channel of question and answer, generated by the Padre's Hour, reinforced the relationship between the chaplains and the men:

Through the Padre's hour the chaplain gets to know his men, as he could in no other way, and on a much deeper level than he could possibly do in a canteen or on a sports field...also the men get to know him...for the soldier, the Padre's Hour is not only keeping him from cynicism and mental vacuity, it is introducing the Te Deum into the tedium. It is helping him to discover the foundations on which a brave new world could be built.³³⁶

The success of the Padre's Hour soon spread to the Middle East, where in the autumn of 1942 the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland visited the men of the Scottish Division. The Moderator had been invited by the Divisional Commander, who had earlier decided to inaugurate a period of one hour religious instruction per week for all officers and men.

For the first course of 10 lessons, the subjects for consideration were: (1.) What's man? (2.) What do we know about God? (3.) What is the Bible? (4.) What is in the Bible? (5.) What was our Lord like and how did He live? (6.) What did Jesus teach? (7.) Why did Jesus die? (8.) How is Our Lord's work continued? (9.) If a man die, shall he live again? (10.) What does it mean to be a Christian?³³⁷

Chaplains serving in the Middle East from 1942 onwards were asked to report back to their senior chaplains the reaction they received during Padre's Hours. A

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., p.37.

³³⁷ Chaplain's Magazine for the Middle East, Vol.1-2, 1943-45, pp.76-77.

summary of these findings was reported in the Chaplain's Magazine for the Middle

East:

There is extremely little real hostility to the Church. The commonest attitude might be accurately described as disappointment or impatience... religious discussion is being continued in billets, canteens, offices and workshops for hours and days after the lesson and so produce new questions for the next Padre's Hour. An interest in the things of the mind and the spirit is being aroused and will grow and inevitably spiritual results are emerging.³³⁸

There appears to have been a good deal of optimism about the benefit of the Padre's Hour from the chaplains serving in the Middle East. When not training or engaged in enemy action, the men had a lot of time on their hands and the opportunity to discuss new things was readily accepted. Undoubtedly the Padre's Hour both stimulated new ideas and showed the men that often they had been thinking the same things but nobody was prepared to risk broaching a subject as personal as religious faith just in case they were ridiculed by their colleagues. What then was the personal experience of Scottish chaplains and the Padre's Hour?

The Rev G.T.H. Reid was chaplain to the 3rd Battalion The Scots Guards from 29 November 1940 until August 1945:

Before 'Padre's Hours' became routine, I had already started a religious discussion group in one of the company's billets, but this was attended only by those already interested. Padre's Hours were started during the long periods of training on Salisbury Plain. Whether or not my talks did the men good, their views and ignorance proved a long over-due eye-opener for myself.³³⁹

The brother of G.T.H. Reid, J.K.S. Reid, enlisted in 1942 and took his first Padre's Hour at the Signals Training Unit in Yorkshire. Here the Padre's Hour was a

³³⁸ Ibid., p.77.

³³⁹ G.T.H. Reid, "With the Scots Guards, 1940-1945", article in the RACHD Journal, Vol.22, No.113, (May 1970). It is worth noting that Reid served alongside the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Runcie of Cuddeston; Viscount Whitelaw, later Lord Whitelaw, and Sir Michael Gow, later General Sir Michael Gow, a distinguished soldier and elder of the Canongate Church in Edinburgh.

regular feature on the training syllabus as it was seen to be important that they had an opportunity to ask questions before they deployed to their operational units:

We took these regularly but they were constantly interrupted because the men finished their training and went away...on average I had Padre's hours 2-3 times per week... The aim of the Padre's Hour was to give the men some instruction in Christianity and in the ways of the Church...It gave the men the chance to ask questions and for the chaplain to exercise a bit of pastoral concern with men who had joined up and some whose families were in difficulties...The men were concerned with their own situation especially if their wives were proving naughty and families were on the verge of breaking up.³⁴⁰

During their period of training for the Parachute Regiment, McLuskey and the four other chaplains on the course were asked one day to take a Padre's Hour to fill an afternoon when heavy snow prevented any outside training. "A trifle wearily,"

McLuskey later recalled:

We formed ourselves into an ecumenical brains' trust...and the usual questions came rolling in from the rest of the course, e.g. What was the Christian attitude to war? Was it possible to love one's enemies? Why were the Churches divided?...The padres certainly learned a good deal from the session. How eager the ordinary man is to explore the territory of religion...How impatiently he is with a narrow denominationalism!³⁴¹

It was not until 12 January 1943 that the Rev A.I. Dunlop recorded in his diary that he had taken his first Padre's Hour. In time Dunlop covered a wide range of topics in the Padre's Hours which he held frequently and occasionally with very large numbers of men. Once again his diary recalls:

10 February 1943: Padre's Hour in afternoon with 'A' and 'D' company.

Topic: What is God?

15 March 1943: Padre's Hour with Presbyterians from 153 Field Ambulance Unit. Later with the Lovat Scouts; B,C,D and HQ Company. Topic: World after War.

28 April 1943: Padre's Hour. Topic: Christian Honesty.

5 May 1943: Padre's Hour. Topic: Christian Ambition.

³⁴⁰ J.K.S. Reid, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

³⁴¹ McLuskey, Parachute Padre, pp.30-31.

3 November 1943: Six Padre's Hours. Topic: The Gospel and Mankind.
Total attendance = 149 men.³⁴²

In May 1944 the Report of the Committee of Chaplains to H.M. Forces received by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, acknowledged the success of the Padre's Hour in the following terms: "The Padre's Hour has been a pronounced success. It is not going too far to say that these informal meetings between Chaplains and troops have been of incalculable benefit to both sides."³⁴³

The success of the Padre's Hour and the very real interest that the men showed in the Church and the Christian Faith resulted in a number of residential courses for soldiers, called "Pre-Confirmation School," being organised by the Chaplains' Department.

The purpose of the Pre-Confirmation course was to allow men to think more deeply about spiritual matters prior to becoming communicant members of the Church of Scotland or the Church of England. Not all chaplains, however, felt that it was entirely necessary to take men away from the unit for pre-confirmation classes. Others, however, felt that any excuse to get the men away from their normal routine would be welcomed.

When the Rev Tommy Nicol was posted to the 5th Battalion of the Black Watch, which was a Territorial Army unit recruited mainly from Angus in Scotland, he had ample opportunity to foster new church members. For, as he later recalled:

There was nothing but good-will towards the Chaplain, the men respected the fact that I had previously been a combatant. I did First Communicants' classes but I was pretty choosy, but there were very few soldiers who were not already members of the Church. They were the product of the old sausage machine, where at a certain age they were prepared and admitted. Subsequently big numbers attended on Communion Sunday. [Originally they had no church of

³⁴² Dunlop, War Diary.

³⁴³ Committee on Chaplain's to H.M. Forces, Reports, (May 1944), p.4.

their own, but used the local parish church.] At first the Officers acted as elders, it was only later, on active service, that NCOs and soldiers acted as Elders.³⁴⁴

Despite Nicol's experience there was a growing demand in other parts of the Scottish Division for a place at the Pre-Confirmation School. Undoubtedly some volunteered because they saw it as a week away from the normal training and life in the Regiment. Others were simply inquisitive about what it was all about. After several weeks of interviews and preparatory instruction the first wartime confirmation school finally opened on 15 December 1943 under the leadership of the Rev W.D. Maxwell, Senior Chaplain of the 15th Scottish Division.

At Hildebrande Barracks, Harrogate, over 500 men gathered together for instruction in the Christian faith. Every soldier had previously been interviewed and the course was given official sanction by the Divisional Commander, Major General Gordon Macmillan, who not only opened the barracks to accommodate the course, but also ensured that his whole staff were on hand to help the chaplains in any way that they could:³⁴⁵

As an example of what this meant, the Divisional Commander placed the course catering under the personal supervision of the Divisional Catering Adviser...In addition the General himself came to give a 15 minute address on the place of religion in the soldiers life.³⁴⁶

Ian Dunlop was one of the administering chaplains on this course.

There were 450 Church of Scotland and 100 Church of England course members, plus chaplains, batmen and the course speakers...We all ate together. I slept in a billet with David Cairns and Kenneth Mc Crae...I had 47 Highland Light Infantry men there, (12 Church of England and 35 Church of Scotland),

³⁴⁴ T.J.T. Nicol, Taped interview, Comrie, 17 Dec 1993.

³⁴⁵ A.I. Dunlop, "Wartime Confirmation School," article, RACHD Journal, Vol.15, No.81, (June 1960), pp.498-499.

³⁴⁶ The Glasgow Herald, 28 Dec 1943.

all ready for confirming except McCallum (Signals) who is too interested in politics....³⁴⁷

The guest speakers on this first course included the Rev Dr E.D. Jarvis, a Church of Scotland minister from Wellington Church in Glasgow, who had been a combatant in the First War. The Church of England was represented by the Suffragan Bishop of Knaresborough. During the week each guest speaker gave six lectures to the members of their respective denominations and after each lecture there was a discussion and an opportunity to ask questions. Each evening there was a combined session for all candidates prior to lights out at 10.30 pm.

In addition to the two main speakers, the Bishop of Ripon, the Vicar of Leeds and the serving chaplains also gave lectures and helped to answer questions in the discussion groups. The topics of discussion after the Church of Scotland lectures included, "God"; "Jesus Christ"; "the Church"; "the Sacraments"; "the Bible"; and "The Christian life."³⁴⁸

At the end of this first course sixty-six men were confirmed as communicants of the Church of England. The majority of the Church of Scotland candidates, however waited to be confirmed by their own chaplains back in their respective Scottish units. On Sunday 19 December 1943, Ian Dunlop wrote in his war diary that he had confirmed 30 men (soldiers of the Highland Light Infantry) who had been at Harrogate. And on the following Wednesday he confirmed four more men in his room who could not be present on the previous Sunday.³⁴⁹

The favourable impression made by this first course for pre-confirmation candidates resulted in a demand for a further course. On 5 March 1944 the Scottish

³⁴⁷ Dunlop, War Diary.

³⁴⁸ The Glasgow Herald, 28 Dec 1943.

chaplain David Cairns, attached to 131 Field Regiment Royal Artillery and soon destined for Normandy, observed that there was considerable interest among the men for the second course: "I have got 146 candidates for it and hope for some 30 more."³⁵⁰

The second Pre-Confirmation School was held at Farnley Camp, Otley, in March 1944. The Rev Dr Hagen, Moderator elect of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and minister of Warrender Church, Edinburgh, attended as the main Church of Scotland speaker. Hagen gave an exposition of the Reformed Faith during his course of lectures, while The Bishop of Knaresborough again gave lectures to the Church of England men. According to Dunlop's diary:

600 men assembled for this course...I had 48 HLI men; the men from the other units did not turn up...on the afternoon of 28 March I walked with the 187 Church of England men to be confirmed to Leathley Church and was present at their confirmation by the Bishop of Knaresborough....³⁵¹

A third Pre-Confirmation school was organised for 19-23 May 1944 at Henfield in Sussex, where the Scottish Division were engaged in pre-Normandy landing training. It is interesting to note that despite the urgency of the time, men were still released from training to attend either this course or other forms of religious instruction organised by their own chaplains. The Church of Scotland speaker at this school was the Rev Dr R.F.V. Scott of St Columba's Pont Street, London. Thirty-five Church of Scotland candidates were prepared and presented for confirmation at this

³⁴⁹ Dunlop, War Diary.

³⁵⁰ D. Cairns, War Diary, National Library of Scotland.

³⁵¹ Dunlop, War Diary.

course by Ian Dunlop: “27 HLI; 7 from the Brigade Signals Squadron and one man from 153 Field Regiment RA.”³⁵²

As a result of the three war-time Pre-Confirmation Schools, about 1,400 men of the Scottish Division received instruction and were admitted and confirmed into the Church.³⁵³ Much of the success of the pre-confirmation course was due to the work and training undertaken by ordinary unit chaplains, who had worked hard at finding men to go on these courses and preparing them for confirmation. Daily contact with the padres made a lasting impression upon the lives of many soldiers. Before long many of those newly admitted to full membership of the Church would be in Normandy, and some would die.

One final area of training for which Army chaplains of the Second World War were given special responsibility was the recruitment and nurture of prospective ministerial candidates. In a routine administrative instruction dated April 1944, the following advice was given:

Chaplains should be on the alert to extend fellowship, sympathy and guidance to those men who (1.) had a vocation for the ministry before the war, (2.) have received a vocation during the course of their war-time experiences, (3.) in their opinion might find a vocation to the ministry.³⁵⁴

During the Second World War the training given to Scottish chaplains developed from virtually nothing into a well-organised and structured period of instruction. The Army demanded a chaplain who was both proficient as a minister but also someone who had a confident understanding of the Army’s procedures and who was thus able to make maximum use of opportunities to offer pastoral care in war.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Dunlop, “Wartime Confirmation School,” article, *RChD Journal*, Vol.15, No.81, (June 1960), p.499.

³⁵⁴ War Office Publication, *Notes for Active Service Chaplains*, Second Army, Apr 1944, pp.13-14.

Scottish chaplains were trained in England with all other chaplains. This presented some with their first taste of life furth of Scotland, but also for many it was their first real experience of ministering in an ecumenical setting. Perhaps inevitably there was an Anglican bias at the training centres, especially as the majority of chaplains in training came from the Church of England. But generally speaking the Church of Scotland and its ministers were well respected in their own right.

Formal courses of basic and specialist instruction for chaplains improved over time, both at Chester and at Tidworth, but the best training and support came from the chaplains helping each other at day conferences and gatherings, where they could exchange ideas and share common concerns. Many found life in the units both lonely and burdensome. Other chaplains found themselves quite unprepared for the violence and bloodshed that they had to deal with in the front line. Perhaps no amount of specialist training could ever fully prepare these men for what was expected of them, but the support the chaplains gave to one another, regardless of denomination, saw most of them through the worst of situations.

Scottish chaplains were clearly willing to spend time with their men. The Presbyterian form of worship was welcomed by many who were not yet confirmed into any branch of the church. When the Army asked for volunteers to serve with the parachute forces a good number of Scottish chaplains came forward. The demands of pre-parachute selection and the dangers of parachuting itself meant that chaplains were sure to be treated exactly the same as everyone else. However it was the experience of a number of Scottish chaplains that the parachute instructors looked after the padres and guided them on their way.

The introduction of the Padre's Hour during World War Two was a major initiative as far as the Chaplains' Department was concerned. For the first time it

guaranteed the chaplain a period in the training cycle in which he could introduce topics of both religious and moral interest and give the soldiers an opportunity to ask questions and share their fears. The level of religious interest uncovered by the Padre's Hours encouraged the chaplains to organise a series of pre-confirmation courses. These courses proved to be popular and as a result many men were confirmed.

All too soon, however, the training was complete and the actual business of waging war had to be faced. The chaplains too had to confront the field of battle, where their training was tested.

CHAPTER FOUR

SCOTTISH CHAPLAINS' AND ACTIVE SERVICE

1939-45

The Army chaplains of the Second World War were not specialist ministers or priests. They were merely men who exercised their ministry under special circumstances. Army chaplains had to take regular services, and administer the Sacraments. They conducted marriages and baptised babies. When “parishioners” (namely service men and women) took ill they were visited at home and in hospital and if they died they were given a funeral service. The minister's actual day to day duties continued in peace time and in war time.

What did make a difference, however, was the situation in which the minister found himself. In war time, he often had no regular preaching station or church in which to worship. Rarely did he have the usual support of a Kirk Session or other committed lay members to share in the work. At times his congregation were spread far and wide and often he had to travel alone or with just his batman in order to minister to his people. Ministers and priests frequently carried out their duties in highly dangerous situations and even when under enemy fire.

On a more positive note the chaplains lived and worked each day within a military community. Their home was the Officers' Mess behind the line and they often based themselves with the doctor at the Regimental Aid Post in the midst of battle. The chaplain lived and moved with his parishioners in all phases of war. From the home base to the troopship and from the first assault to the last battle, the chaplain had the opportunity to be in the midst of the action.

This chapter will examine some of the more unusual and demanding facets of the Scottish Chaplains' ministry on active service between 1939-45. It will follow the experiences of a number of Scottish ministers as they carried out their duties at home and overseas and in the various phases of battle.

Opinions varied widely as to the chaplain's duty in battle. It was not laid down in any manual; he received no orders and often worked on his own. He therefore needed to be quite clear in his own mind what his duty was, and how he might best exercise his ministry. It was the experience of chaplains in the First World War that commanders were not happy with them moving about in the front line and therefore they tended to keep to the rear areas.

The chaplains who served with the Eighth Army during World War Two formed themselves into a 'Brotherhood', the seeds of which were sown in the Western Desert. The strength of the 'Brotherhood' grew from their experiences in Egypt and it was fostered and encouraged by some great soldiers including General Sir Archibald Wavell. The first Assistant Chaplain General of the Eighth Army was the Rev Alan Davidson, a minister of the Church of Scotland, who served from September 1941 until March 1942.

One of Davidson's successors was the Rev F.L. Hughes, who "gradually fashioned the Royal Army Chaplains' Department team spirit into a real fellowship and brotherhood of all denominations."³⁵⁵ In January 1944 Hughes set down guidelines, based on the work and experiences of chaplains in the Eighth Army, as to how best the chaplain might operate under active service conditions. His purpose was twofold. Firstly he wanted to give all chaplains a framework around which their thoughts and

³⁵⁵Army Publication, The Chaplains of the Grand Assault. A Summary of the experiences in the field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, (Middle East 1944), forward, p.i. Copy found in the RChD museum.

experiences could be organised: “An ordered scheme should provide every padre with a design of a house, and so an appropriate place for his bricks and some interest in his quota of stuff for the common work.”³⁵⁶

Secondly, Hughes wanted to set out the chaplain's work in a way that others, both officers and men, could understand and appreciate: “The padre's work is an unassembled jigsaw puzzle, bits of which make sense. It is about time we pieced it together and showed them a whole picture...maybe much larger and better than they thought.”³⁵⁷ The starting point, however, was that the chaplain should follow in battle, as at other times, an unchanging principle: “he is there that Christ may work through his personality, and he should attempt nothing else - that is all. It is enough to ensure full employment.”³⁵⁸

Hughes was determined that each chaplain should know exactly what he had to do and be prepared for every eventuality. It was his belief that if the chaplain was not trained for the various situations he might encounter, he would be easily shaken by events, lose confidence in himself and as a result have a diminishing influence over others. “The untrained padre,” according to Hughes’ guidelines, “saintly and brave, wandering round a battlefield, set on nothing in particular, but hoping that a useful job will turn up, has no dominating idea controlling him, and every loud bang, bomb-burst, or nearby explosion jumps into the empty saddle and rides him to blazes.”³⁵⁹

Experience in the Western Desert and elsewhere confirmed the chaplains of the Eighth Army in the view that “religion has nothing to do with it [meaning their ability to operate on the battlefield]; it is training...Therefore training is required for every

³⁵⁶Ibid., p.ii.

³⁵⁷Ibid., p.ii.

³⁵⁸Ibid., p.6.

kind of situation, battle, camp and invasion.”³⁶⁰ Hughes had a saying that “Service before Services”³⁶¹ was all important and it was from this position that he led and trained his chaplains.

The conception of the chaplain's duty in battle, as it developed out of the experiences of the brotherhood of chaplains with the Eighth Army from Alamein to Tripoli 1942-43 divides into seven phases: (1.) The approach to battle. (2.) Eve of battle services. (3.) Voluntary companionship at zero hour. (4.) Practical service in battle. (5.) Reconstructive companionship in thought after action. (6.) The aftermath of battle and the burial of the dead. (7.) The epilogue. Thanksgiving and memorial services. These headings will provide a framework for the remainder of this chapter.

1. THE APPROACH TO BATTLE.

Regard all training as an approach to battle. We are detached from Parishes and set in an Army raised to fight effectively for God's cause. That the Army be effective is the Staff's job; that it serve God is ours. As the minds of men are turned to battle, spotlight for them the conflict of good and evil, the opposing standards of right and wrong, the just foundations of our cause, the presence of Christ, the value of prayer, the glory of sacrifice, the gift of eternal life, and such things as deepen their sincerity and confidence as soldiers gathered to battle by God.³⁶²

Chaplains joined their units of attachment in one of two ways. Either they were posted to the unit in the normal posting and promotional rotation or they were sent to a unit as a battle casualty replacement. A chaplain joining his unit in peacetime or even during the build-up to war had much greater opportunities to get to know his men and

³⁵⁹Ibid., p.5.

³⁶⁰Ibid., p.5.

³⁶¹ I think what Hughes meant by his catch phrase, “Service before Services” was that on the battlefield conditions did not always make it easy for chaplains to hold formal religious services. Where there was an enemy artillery, mortar or air threat, it was unwise to have large groups of men gathered together even for a short church service. Hughes was therefore commending to his chaplains that they could serve the church well by simply being there and doing whatever they could to alleviate the fears of both officers and men.

³⁶²Ibid., p.6.

for them to get to know him. The chaplain who found himself as a battle casualty replacement had a more difficult job picking up the pieces of another man's ministry. The Scottish chaplains' ministry in the build-up to war and the time spent on the troopship will be examined in this section.

According to Middleton Brumwell, an experienced former chaplain and author of a book called The Army Chaplain, the duties of the chaplain in peace time were familiar and well-defined in King's regulations. These included the "usual services on Sunday, commencing with early celebrations of Holy communion, and the Church parade services for various units..."³⁶³ During the week duties included visitation to hospitals, detention centres, married quarters and social institutions such as the N.A.A.F.I. tea or rest room. In addition Middleton Brumwell remarked that "a chaplain should be informed of route marches and be given a chance of proceeding with the men. He should go with them to field training manoeuvres. It is as much part of his training for active service as for other branches of the army."³⁶⁴ The idea was that the chaplain be given ample opportunity to get to know his parishioners and to identify with the tasks that lay before them. The opportunities for the chaplain to mix with the men increased immeasurably as they trained for war.

The War Office handbook entitled Notes for Active Service Chaplains and dated April 1944 gives further advice to chaplains on how to minister in the transition to war period or in a lull in the battle.³⁶⁵ Chaplains serving with the troops in the field were to remember that the duty of all chaplains was, first and foremost, 'the spiritual care of all troops' whom they served. The chaplain was therefore to feel that he was

³⁶³P Middleton Brumwell, The Army Chaplain, (London 1943), p.36.

³⁶⁴Ibid., p.36.

³⁶⁵War Office handbook, Notes for Active Service Chaplains, by The Assistant Chaplain General Second Army, Apr 1944.

part of the Army and that he had an important role to play. The chaplain who understood the problems and situations which the troops would face would be able to estimate their true needs. Therefore he must know his men and be known by them: “The work of the chaplain must be among the men, not merely directed at them.”³⁶⁶ It was the contention of J.W.J. Steele, Assistant Chaplain General Second Army, that “one of the outstanding characteristics that troops looked for in their chaplains was helpfulness, and this characteristic inspired confidence and indicates sympathy.”³⁶⁷ Every chaplain was therefore to do all that he could to look after himself in dangerous, trying or uncomfortable times, for only then would he be looked upon as fully one of the family and not as a poor relation.

Middleton Brumwell argued that “modern war is so exacting that the doctors, nurses, orderlies, and fighting men have little time for sentiment, and so it was those brave men [the chaplains] who formed a precious link between the wounded man and his loved ones far away.”³⁶⁸ Many important and precious links were made during the build-up to war and the approach to battle. The experience of chaplains in the Eighth Army was that “in camp we transmit through small services a spirit far greater than the things we do. Our general experience in rest periods suggests a plan of campaign in which all special talents somewhere finds a constructive role.”³⁶⁹

Experience taught chaplains not only that they had to get to know the men but also that they had to help them prepare for the fight, including helping them overcome isolation, boredom and fear. “The enemy,” it was stressed, “is frustration, reaction, idle dreams...boredom. The man to deal with him has non-stop purpose. Set men steadily

³⁶⁶Ibid., p.1.

³⁶⁷Ibid., pp.1-2.

³⁶⁸Middleton Brumwell, p.38.

towards the goal of final victory..."³⁷⁰ Through regular services, Padre's Hours and occasional conversations the chaplain could influence the men as they prepared for battle. Inevitably some chaplains became heavily involved in organising welfare and social activities, but they were warned that this was not their main function. They had to be ministers of the gospel first and foremost. Nevertheless, some chaplains found themselves in situations where welfare support was needed most urgently.

Padre Ian Dunlop's war diary reveals an array of welfare and pastoral activities which occupied his time prior to deploying with 10th Highland Light Infantry to France on 18 June 1944. On 15/16 October 1942 his diary records his involvement with a Sapper Walley of 714 company (squadron) Royal Engineers, a "compassionate case." Dunlop noted: "try to arrange compassionate posting. Genuine case. Wife very ill and child too."³⁷¹

On Friday 27 March 1943 Dunlop visited the detention centre: "Visited Pringle in the guard room. Three days absent. Wife misbehaving. He tried to get home."³⁷² Sometimes the chaplains dealt with less serious matters. On 7 August 1943 Dunlop wrote in his diary: "To NAAFI canteen reference girl throwing cup at corporal."³⁷³ (It was common practice that most static units and training camps had a canteen facility operated by the Navy, Army and Air Force Institute (NAAFI).)

While training for war Dunlop regularly took Sunday services and church parades, celebrated the sacraments and acted as pastor. If possible he would interview

³⁶⁹The Chaplains of the Grand Assault, p.8.

³⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p.8.

³⁷¹A.I. Dunlop, War Diary, 15/16 Oct 1942.

³⁷²*Ibid.*, 27 Mar 1943.

³⁷³*Ibid.*, 7 August 1943.

each new draft of recruits as they arrived from the training depot. Unfortunately as training intensified and exercises became more realistic soldiers were killed.

The first fatality which Ian Dunlop had to face was on a Brigade exercise, when a soldier was killed after a failed attempt at crossing the River Derwent. Dunlop's diary records the sequence of events:

- 1 October 1943. News of fall of Naples. Corbett (B company) missing. Dreadfully sorry to have no news of Corbett...attempting again tonight to cross river.
- 2 October. Vehicle sunk with men in river during night and one of our carriers overturned hurting several men. No news of Corbett.
- 11 October. Corbett still missing. PM. Some news of Corbett's body being found. With Adjutant in evening arranging things.
- 13 October. Enquiry being held reference death of Corbett.
- 15 October. Wrote to Mr and Mrs Corbett reference son's death.
- Sunday 17 October. Service in NAAFI...prayers reference the death of Corbett.
- 27 October. On leave. Visited Mrs Corbett, Mother of boy drowned in Derwent.³⁷⁴

Dunlop was evidently heavily involved and deeply moved by this first death with which he had to deal as his battalion trained for war. From 12 September 1942 until 17 June 1944 the 10th Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry prepared itself for service overseas, and Dunlop steeped himself in the life of the regiment to such an extent that by the time they eventually crossed to France he was minister to them all. Ten days after arriving in France the battalion was in action at the Battle of Cheux. In the aftermath Dunlop recalled that he buried "19 British and 2 German dead."³⁷⁵

After Dunkirk another Scottish chaplain, the Rev Tom Calvert, found himself attached to No. 25 Scottish General Hospital in Bangor, Co. Down. After some weeks it became apparent to the Assistant Chaplain General Northern Ireland that the large

³⁷⁴Ibid., various dates in text.

³⁷⁵Ibid., 26/27 June 1944.

build up of British and American troops in preparation for the Second Front required more direct chaplaincy involvement. The General Officer Commanding therefore decided to appoint a chaplain in charge of welfare and entertainment and Calvert was given the job:³⁷⁶ “Soon we had a dozen mobile units working daily giving the troops film entertainment in their various camps...We organised live entertainment parties mostly of ladies...in addition to the visits from the celebrated E.N.S.A. parties.”³⁷⁷

In July 1939 Egerton Chadwick, a Church of England chaplain, wrote an article in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal on the subject of “Troopships and Chaplains.” He begins by saying that he had wide experience of troopships and offered some sound advice to other chaplains who might soon find themselves on voyages of two to three months on a troopship.

Chadwick observed that a troopship was not an ideal place for Divine services: “the close and confined space when a ship is packed with people, as most troopships are, allows very little room for large congregations or for privacy.”³⁷⁸ While acknowledging that the time spent on a troopship in social or recreational activities could be important for the chaplain, Chadwick recommended that “it is not advisable for a chaplain to undertake too much of the actual running or responsibility for this. Let him assist on games and other committees, by all means, so long as it does not tie

³⁷⁶ Here is an example of a commander deciding that the chaplain had an important role to play and that in this instance he would be best employed coordinating welfare and entertainment. This however did not detract from the chaplain's primary role as a minister of the gospel and the retention of his spiritual integrity and independence.

³⁷⁷ Elizabeth Calvert, A Padre Remembers (Memoirs of the Rev Tom Calvert), Privately published in Langholm Dec 1989, pp.29-30. E.N.S.A. was the abbreviation for the Entertainments National Services Association.

³⁷⁸ C. Egerton Chadwick, “Troopships and Chaplains”, article, RACHD Journal, Vol. VI, No.48, July 1939, pp.281-285.

him too much; for the real work is the spiritual side of things, and for this he will find abundant opportunity.”³⁷⁹

Apart from the routine of inspections, exercises and occasional amusements, soldiers on the troopships had little to do. The chaplain therefore had ample opportunity to visit the troop decks and to engage in “many very privileged conversations and confidences among all ranks. The personal side of a chaplain's work is unquestionably his greatest opportunity for spiritual work.”³⁸⁰ Chadwick reminded his readers that “officers and men of all ranks expect a chaplain to be first and foremost a chaplain in the truest sense. All men, of whatever views, respect a man who naturally and genuinely fills this post.”³⁸¹

The Rev Stuart Loudon of the Church of Scotland spent nine weeks on a troopship, the Union Castle liner Arundel Castle, as it made its way from the Clyde to Cairo. They set sail on Saturday 4 January 1941 and arrived at Port Tewfik, on the Egyptian coast on Saturday 8 March 1941. There were at least thirteen chaplains of all denominations on board. Loudon began the voyage sharing a cabin with three other chaplains, two belonging to the Church of England and one a Roman Catholic priest.

The Arundel Castle was one of six Union Castle liners to be requisitioned as troopships. It was packed for this voyage and very soon the chaplains found themselves testing one another's theology. While still anchored on the Clyde on 7 January 1941 Loudon recorded in his diary: “An argument in the cabin on the different conceptions of the Church, Romanist, Anglican and Presbyterian.”³⁸² Ten days later he wrote: “interesting talk on relations between the Churches with Jock Thomson

³⁷⁹Ibid., p.282.

³⁸⁰Ibid., p.282.

³⁸¹Ibid., p.285.

(Primitive Methodist) and Pawley (Church of England). What mountains of misunderstanding and prejudice separate us!”³⁸³

Despite these theological discussions and debates the chaplains apparently lived happily together and every day they took turns leading daily prayers as well as the more formal services:

Sunday 2 February 1941. Service on deck at 0930 am taken by the Rev Bush (United Board Chaplain. Congregationalist)... Voluntary service on deck at 4.30 p.m., taken by the Rev Metcalfe (Church of England).

Friday 7 February 1941. Attended Anglican chaplain’s evensong at 6 p.m., when the Methodist chaplain gave a devotional address.³⁸⁴

One of the concerns on board the troopship was the control of alcohol. On Monday 20 January 1941 Louden wrote in his diary that the “Chief Steward is distressed at the low consumption of beer on board (only 3000 bottles a week). While the Sea Transport Officer had thought the Arundel Castle’s stock too small: only 66,000 bottles!!” (Presumably it was the Chief Steward’s problem to store the beer while the Sea Transport Officer enjoyed his drink and was worried that the supply would run out.)

A later report by the War Office’s Morale Inter Services Committee dated October 1944 addressed the question of beer consumption amongst the troops. In the section entitled, “Conditions of Life and Service,” the topic of “Beer” falls between “Feeding” and “Mail”, all of which were seen to be important for the good morale of the soldier. The report stated: “Beer has a morale value out of all proportion to its

³⁸²R Stuart Louden, War Diary, 7 Jan 1941, copy held in the RACHD museum.

³⁸³*Ibid.*, 17 Jan 1941.

³⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 2 and 7 Feb 1941.

intrinsic worth and the lack of it is felt all the more by the troops because they see the American's enjoying a comparatively liberal supply.”³⁸⁵

During his nine week voyage Stuart Loudon frequently made comments in his diary about the abuse of alcohol especially by the officers:

24 February 1941. Attended troops concert in the 2nd class dining saloon. A ribald, rowdy affair, reflecting little credit on the officers who contributed.

25 February 1941. Disappointed at the increasing alcoholism among the officers on the ship.

3 March 1941. In the Gulf of Suez this morning...tragic amount of drunkenness among the officers, celebrating the end of the voyage.³⁸⁶

Apart from daily prayers and visiting around the ship, Loudon volunteered to do occasional duties as the officer in charge of the lookouts. This was a continuous tour of duty with the aim of ensuring that the six sentries were constantly alert for submarines and aeroplanes. In addition the senior chaplain, the Rev Alan Davidson, appointed an orderly chaplain each day who would visit the hospital and be the first on call in the event of a pastoral emergency.

On 16 February Loudon began evening prayers with the men in the tourist dining saloon at 9.30 p.m. He was encouraged that on this first occasion fifty turned up. But the next evening the numbers were down: “Took prayers with the men at 9.30 p.m. A smaller number, owing to concert.”³⁸⁷ By 2 March 1941 the voyage was nearing its end but by now a pattern of regular Sunday worship had been established:

Sunday 2 March 1941. Rose for Church of Scotland communion at 7.30 a.m., Rev Alan Davidson (Church of Scotland) officiating, then went on duty with lookout sentries from 8-a.m. After a hurried breakfast, attended the United service on deck, taken by the Rev J. Thomson (Methodist)... Volunteer service

³⁸⁵War Office Document, “Report of the Morale Inter-Services Committee,” 11 Oct 1944, PRO, WO/32/1194.

³⁸⁶Loudon, *War Diary*.

³⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 16-17 Feb 1941.

on deck at 4.30 p.m. taken by Rev Vernon Clarke (Church of Scotland)...Prayers with men at 9.30 p.m. taken by Rev Ernest Funnel (Methodist).³⁸⁸

Another Church of Scotland chaplain who experienced lengthy service on a troopship was the Rev Tommy Nicol. He had arranged to get married in March 1942 but was advised by his Commanding Officer that the day he picked would not be suitable as the battalion were soon to move. Undeterred he brought the wedding date forward and was married by the Senior Chaplain Scotland. After one day's leave he returned to his battalion and moved to Camberley, where the battalion was brought up to war establishment prior to deploying from Liverpool in May 1942 on the troopship SS Empress of Australia. Eight weeks later he disembarked in Egypt.

About his time on the troopship Nicol reflected:

During that eight weeks there was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the men, I got to know them all. We had some instructional classes wider than just communicants classes. I was allowed to talk to the different companies...it was very much cut and thrust. We had a voluntary bible discussion group in one of the cabins...Most of the time we sat on board ship in groups talking and getting to know one another. A lot of their conversation did not turn to the things of the Church but to the things of God. The Church as the Church did not really mean anything to them.³⁸⁹

There was a Church of England chaplain on board, named, appropriately, the Rev P.R. English, who originally insisted on separate denominational services. Fairly soon, however, they agreed to have a number of general services for the 5000 troops on board, followed by separate services of Holy communion. Denominational differences came to be viewed as less and less important.

The approach to battle phase gave the chaplains opportunity to get to know their men and for the men to get the measure of the chaplain. The minister or priest who was prepared to mix with the men, to sit and chat with them and not to be an

³⁸⁸Ibid., 2 Mar 1941.

³⁸⁹T.J.T. Nicol, Taped interview, Comrie, 17 Dec 1993.

aloof figure who lived with the officers, was usually welcomed. The rank and file liked to see the chaplain take part in their military training: to go through the exercises, forced marches and sleeping rough which the men had to endure prior to embarkation. Religious questions arose naturally. The Church meant little to some men but they still had doubts, fears and questions which they would put to the chaplain if given the opportunity. They were, in Nicol's words, asking things about God rather than about the Church.

All chaplains had access to a captive audience of young men, and perhaps nowhere more so than in the confined spaces of the troopship, where for days and weeks on end paths would cross and opportunities to share the gospel would present themselves. Some men would volunteer to attend a service or a religious discussion group for any number of reasons, some because they felt the need to find faith before battle, others because the journey was long and they were bored with the routine elsewhere. The chaplains of the Eighth Army knew that every opportunity must be taken to prepare the men spiritually for the days of battle that lay ahead.

2. EVE OF BATTLE SERVICES.

Hold them always. Troops welcome and respond to them. Pitch them in a major, not a minor key; consecrate resolve, appeal to strength, pass on the attitude of Christ to duty: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world..." and all its allurements. Do not treat these services as an insurance against death. Men wish to meet their God that they may better meet their foe. The spirit is: "Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered." And the general theme: Praise for a just cause, pray to be worthy of it and commendation to God of all its issues for us and ours.³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰A Summary of the experiences in the field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, (Middle East 1944), p.6.

The question as to whether or not church parades³⁹¹ should be voluntary was a matter of constant discussion long before the outbreak of the Second World War. The Interdenominational Advisory Committee,³⁹² had considered the question of “Compulsory Attendance” at church parades in April 1924. Here the Chaplain General expressed the view that “the abolition of compulsory parade was one of the most lamentable things that could happen. The Army went to Church in a corporate capacity and not as individuals...”³⁹³ Dr McClymont, the Church of Scotland representative, agreed with the Chaplain General but the Roman Catholic Bishop, Keatinge, said he personally would support the voluntary system. He thought that a man ought not to be forced into church. The debate was broadened by the Wesleyan speaker, a Mr Bateson, who thought that the services “contributed to the morale of the Army and that compulsory attendance of the men was an advantage to the forces as a fighting unit.”³⁹⁴ There was general support from the remainder of the meeting for a continuation of compulsory church parades, although the Irish Presbyterian, Dr Simm, thought the House of Commons might take the view that the military should be as free as the civilian in regard to attendance at Divine Service. After debating the issue on 2 April 1924, the House of Commons rejected a second reading of an amendment to the Army Act that would have required the compulsory attendance at church parades by 114 ayes and 164 noes.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ The church parade was a form of organised religion. Soldiers were told where and when to go to church and often they had to dress in best uniform and were physically marched to the church door.

³⁹² The Interdenominational Advisory committee was composed of representatives of all the Churches that sent ministers or priests to the armed forces. Their remit was to support the chaplains’ work and to ensure that their respective religious traditions were preserved in the military.

³⁹³ War Office Document, “Interdenominational Advisory Committee,” minutes, 3 Apr 1942, PRO. WO/32/4013.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

On 25 February 1930 the Army Council considered amendments to the Army and Air Force (Annual) Bill 1930 on the subject of compulsory church parade. From 1605, King's Regulations had provided for compulsory church parade. When the issue came before the Commons on 24 March 1930, the Secretary of State at the War Office argued that "no man was ever forced to go to a Church in which he did not believe, nor did any man join the army in ignorance that these parades existed."³⁹⁶ In the ensuing debate the Chaplain General claimed that the men enjoyed church parade and there was no other method by which freedom of worship for the soldier could be ensured. Further he stated that "if compulsory church parades were abolished, the Chaplains' Department would go with it."³⁹⁷ In the event, the Commons decided that no change should be made in the present practice.

In 1941 the Army Council reaffirmed their conviction of the value of church parades as a source of spiritual and moral strength in the present conflict and decided that "as far as the exigencies of the military situation permit, every facility should be given for public and private worship."³⁹⁸ As the war progressed, however, opposition to the church parade mounted. A proposal to replace the formal parade with a system of "marking in" was discussed. This was an attempt to get rid of the dreaded inspection that usually preceded a church parade and which caused so much resentment in the ranks. The Executive Committee of the Army Council accepted the "marking in" proposal as suggested by the Adjutant General on 18 June 1943.

The decision to curtail the inspection before a church parade was prompted by the War Office Morale Committee's examination of a paper on morale written by a

³⁹⁶ War Office Document. "Suggested Abolition of Compulsory Church Parade," PRO WO/32/4014.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ War Office Document, "Compulsory Church Parade," PRO WO/32/14687.

private soldier in the Black Watch dated December 1942.³⁹⁹ This paper set out to assess causes of dissatisfaction amongst soldiers at the end of 1942. With a wide ranging brief the anonymous author referred to problems with the soldier's status, the nature of army discipline, leadership, billets, messing and pay. But in regard to religion he wrote:

It is unfortunate but true that impiety is the reaction to many of the attempts to introduce religion into army life...the forbidding display of compulsion and regimentation inherent in many church parades appears to be entirely wrong in relation to the fundamentals of true religion. The Church through Army channels, has great opportunities and responsibilities concerning morale, coercion and the 'driving' of men to Church under threat of punishment means the squandering of those opportunities... Abolish the compulsory Church parade and Regimental inspection. The latter should be a part of the unit's military training and not a prelude to worship. The present system is wrecking religion in the Army.⁴⁰⁰

Clearly the emphasis should be on the Church and not on the parade. How did the Scottish Chaplains deal with the army's view of religion which provided such golden opportunities? On the eve of battle were such services welcomed or rejected?

In his book The Army Chaplain, Middleton Brumwell argued that it must not be forgotten that every parade in the Army is compulsory. For example, the medical examination, the education class and physical training were all compulsory:

Is a parade for religious service of less value than a parade for education or physical training? Compulsion in this respect is a guarantee of the individual for the preservation of his liberty to attend church service, and such facilities would be denied if this were utilised for military training.⁴⁰¹

The chaplains with the Second Army were cautioned that "Parade or Voluntary Unit Services" should be short, and should be constructed with the needs of the men as

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Middleton Brumwell, p.41.

the first consideration.⁴⁰² In addition chaplains were instructed that under certain circumstances full services may not be possible but “Family prayers” could often be fitted in when a larger service was impracticable. On the eve of battle there was a “tension of anticipation. Here the chaplain has a great spiritual opportunity...If it is possible short services of 'Dedication and devotion to Duty' should be taken, and a cheerful word for all at this time should be forthcoming.”⁴⁰³

Army Order 116 of 1941 and Order 143 of 1942 specified the importance of Sunday Observance.⁴⁰⁴ As this was a directive from the highest echelons in the Army, it was now the responsibility of the chaplain in agreement with the Commanding Officer to ensure that eve of battle services took place.

On the eve of battle even the most irreligious would usually willingly pause and listen to what the Padre had to say. Complaints for or against compulsory church parades dwindled into insignificance. The Scots minister Nevile Davidson, one-time chaplain to the King's Own Scottish Borderers and later minister of Glasgow Cathedral, knew only too well through the experience of shared training how the men felt on the eve of battle: “There are thousands, especially in our time, who are afraid of tomorrow. They have lost hope. They have no faith in the future. The future seems dark and uncertain. There is a tremendous sense of insecurity in the hearts of men at present.”⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Notes for Active Service Chaplains, p.3.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p.6.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p.30.

⁴⁰⁵ A. Nevile Davidson, essay on “Hope,” in R. Selby Wright (ed) Front Line Religion, (London 1941), p.50.

In an article published in Life and Work in December 1941, Davidson attempted to address the problem of “The Modern Army and the Christian Faith.”⁴⁰⁶ Here he argued that “there is a great deal of unconscious Christianity even among the roughest and toughest of men.”⁴⁰⁷ He went on to say that the pre-war Church had largely lost its hold on younger men and the majority had grown up in a Christian land but were deeply ignorant of the Christian faith: “To most of them the Bible is an unknown book.” Military service brought man and Church together and in turn created a great opportunity but an awesome responsibility for the chaplains.

An earlier article published in Life and Work in April 1941 by Angus McIver defended the church parade by saying that “the average soldier is not indifferent to religion...in regard to church parades, the average soldier thoroughly enjoys them...He may not be ostentatious in his testimony but his loyalty is still there.”⁴⁰⁸ The argument for and against church parades and organised religion varied from place to place and from soldier to soldier. Clearly there was a significant difference between compulsory church parades whilst in training in Britain or at rest behind the lines, and a final service on the eve of going into action. The latter would have been extraordinarily charged and even the most sceptical found these services a meaningful experience.

The experience of services before battle were mostly positive when viewed from the Scottish chaplains’ perspective. The Rev Fraser McLuskey parachuted into France with the 1st Special Air Service Regiment and on the first Sunday held a service prior to the start of operations: “Our simple act of worship seemed the natural thing to do. We wanted to give thanks for our preservation thus far. We wanted to commend

⁴⁰⁶ A. N. Davidson, “The Modern Army and the Christian Faith,” Life and Work, No. 144, Dec 1941, pp.249-250.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.250.

⁴⁰⁸ A. McIver, “The Church and the Soldier,” Life and Work, No.136, Apr 1941.

our operations, our loved ones and ourselves to God's care and keeping... We were engaged in a task on which we believed we could ask His blessing... We were under no illusions as to the risk we ran ourselves."⁴⁰⁹ The task they had before them was to sabotage vital installations or to ambush the enemy: "The life we led together made it easy for me to pray with and for my companions and hard for me to say anything concerning the Christian faith of which I was not myself utterly convinced."⁴¹⁰

The men with whom McLuskey served were amongst the hardest and the bravest the Army had to offer. But he found them appreciative of Christian worship before and after their most dangerous missions: "My men were not, on the whole, keen churchmen. When there was a church parade, they were glad enough to come. I found them easy to talk to and easy to lead in worship. There was respect for the Church and little, if any, opposition."⁴¹¹ Their way of life and the language of the Church were incompatible but "Army service had brought them within the orbit of the Christian Church and given both renewed opportunity. What would they make of the opportunity? What would the Church make of it?"⁴¹²

The invasion of Normandy saw many soldiers and their chaplains going into action for the first time. The Rev David Cairns, (later Professor at Aberdeen University,) served as chaplain to 131 (City of Glasgow) Field Regiment Royal Artillery as part of the 15th Scottish Division. He wrote to his parents from Normandy on 9 July 1944: "Now all the services are voluntary and the men attend much more

⁴⁰⁹ McLuskey, The Cloud and The Fire, pp.69-70.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p.74.

⁴¹¹ McLuskey, Parachute Padre, p.54.

⁴¹² Ibid.

gladly.”⁴¹³ They welcomed his services especially on the eve of battle. In another letter to his parents from near Venlo dated 17 December 1944 Cairns wrote: “I don't get a great deal of pastoral work in the narrower sense. I do a good deal of walking around the men in the gun positions. But don't often get the chance of talking for long enough to get deep. There are you see a good many to cover.”⁴¹⁴ The disposition of the gun batteries on the battle field meant that the chaplain had frequently to take impromptu services and family prayers.

David Cairns's diary entry for Sunday 25 June 1944 illustrates the dangers that he faced taking services on the battle field: “We had a short service in the church (in the village of Bronay)...the enemy cannot have been more than 3000 yards away...Later, when there was a lull in the firing, the men gathered into one gun pit about 20 at a time from each troop, and we had a short service without singing. The most advanced troop was about 1500 yards from the enemy.”⁴¹⁵

A week later on 2 July 1944 Cairns took “family prayers” with the officers and men of the Regimental Headquarters and of 'C' troop. In his diary that evening he wrote: “this doubtless reads strangely naive to write of men cheering as enemy fighters fall in flames and then kneeling in prayer to the Heavenly Father of these same men. But we did it and not without feeling the tension.”⁴¹⁶

Ministry on the battlefield carried with it a great burden. The violence of modern warfare, with its immense civilian casualties, seemed at times to be completely alien to the Christian message of love and peace. After one particularly heavy air raid

⁴¹³ D. Cairns, War Diary. The personal papers and War Diary of the Rev Prof David Cairns are held in the National Library of Scotland. Accession numbers 5932, 6828 and 6835.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter, 17 Dec 1944.

⁴¹⁵ Cairns, War Diary, p.13.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.35.

on 7 July 1944 Cairns described in his diary an apologia for the exercise of a Christian

Ministry in the front line:

I wondered whether or not we were in the right frame of mind for the worship of God. But I said to myself, "why not!" At the start of the service I said, "we have been seeing something very terrible in these last minutes. I have no doubt that many comparatively innocent and quite innocent people have been killed in that time, both among the French and the Germans. But when a nation does what Germany does its innocent soldiers suffer with the guilty." This doubtless was to take the sufferings of others too light heartedly but after all it was fact and not sentiment.⁴¹⁷

Cairns believed that what they were doing was for a just cause and that God would honour them in the work. He was certain that the "more corporate feeling a unit had, the more sympathetic it was to worship and religion."⁴¹⁸ But he was equally aware what a great privilege it was to talk of things eternal to men who daily faced danger and death. After one particular service he recalls, "it had been a moving thing to talk to these soldiers, returning into battle, on the Grace of God."⁴¹⁹

Prior to the battle for Alamein the Rev Tommy Nicol was chaplain with the 5th Battalion of the Black Watch. He recalled how he took a communion service on the eve of battle:

We were very busy in the days before Alamein with both the Black Watch and a Gordon Battalion to look after. We were not allowed to have big groups of men together so we had dozens of small services. The Roman Catholic Priest asked if his people could also come to the communion services as he was busy elsewhere. I preached on the text: 'God is our refuge and our strength.'...The battalion then went into action hyped up spiritually but within minutes of crossing the start line some were dead.⁴²⁰

Veterans of the Second World War paint a very mixed picture as to the benefit or appreciation of church parades and eve of battle services. Lord Borwick, who won

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p.42.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p.109.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p.140.

⁴²⁰ T.J.T. Nicol, Taped interview, Comrie, 17 Dec 1993.

an M.C. with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, recalled that during the war “church parades were good value with a feeling that the family was worthwhile and one was a member of it.”⁴²¹ Other senior officers from the war shared this more positive attitude to church parade. Colonel Mick Baker-Baker, formerly Commanding Officer of 1st Battalion Black Watch, remarked that the complete abolition of church parade was bad as “an occasional church parade surely had a marked effect for good.”⁴²² Brigadier Bradford, another senior Black Watch officer, also believed that it was a bad thing stopping church parade: “Many men were quite ready to come to church services but lacked the will-power to get there on their own.”⁴²³

The arguments against forced and formal religion, however, were much more convincing. One Black Watch veteran of World War Two, D.S. Roger, in reply to a survey conducted by the Rev Tommy Nicol Nicol in 1980, defended the right of the individual to worship as he pleased: “I would go to church willingly on my own but did what I could to miss church parades...I was with so many who were there against their will and made a fool of the proceedings and made me uncomfortable.”⁴²⁴ The Rev R. J. Henderson nearly gave up all hope of becoming a minister on account of church parades: “When the war started I was at school and then university. I was interested in the ministry but withdrew my name from the list of possible students soon after enlisting in reaction against compulsory church parades and in sympathy with the anti-

⁴²¹ Lord Borwick. Letter in reply to an advertisement placed in the Sunday Express, 8 November 1994; Life and Work, December 1994, and the Regimental Magazines of the Scottish Division.

⁴²² Col. M. Baker-Baker, Reply to the Nicol Survey. This was a questionnaire set and distributed to World War Two friends and colleagues by the Rev Dr T.J.T. Nicol in 1979-80. An example of the survey questions appears at annex. A. to this chapter. The survey remains in the personal papers of Dr Nicol.

⁴²³ Brigadier B.L. Bradford, the Nicol Survey.

⁴²⁴ D.S. Roger, the Nicol Survey.

church sentiments of many of my fellow jocks.”⁴²⁵ He later completed his studies and was ordained as a chaplain.

The question of whether or not church parade should be compulsory was one which could not easily be resolved. There is clear evidence that soldiers in particular resented the inevitable parade that preceded the church service. Some chaplains equally found this military procedure a barrier rather than conducive to worship. The parade service, however, brought people together and gave the willing though weaker brethren an excuse to share in public worship.

Conversely there is equally good evidence to show that on the eve of battle the men welcomed a visit from the Padre and would take Holy communion. There are many accounts of Roman Catholic soldiers taking communion from Protestant chaplains and for men who were not confirmed asking for the bread and wine. There was a great responsibility upon the individual chaplain to find the right words for the right occasion. The eve of battle service or family prayers gave the faint-hearted courage and the unbeliever a ray of hope. A good chaplain instilled confidence in men gathered to do battle as they waited in the presence of God.

3. VOLUNTARY COMPANIONSHIP AT ZERO HOUR.

Show, as a non-combatant, the will to share danger and death for truth and right, and so bring to men the authentic spirit of the Cross. It will do work as such. That is, repeat is, the spiritual work of the chaplain at zero hour, and his text: “Yea, I am with you in trouble.” In battle all are wanted for a supreme effort at full capacity, and amongst them the men charged with the message that God loves and is with them.⁴²⁶

Zero hour was that moment in the conflict when battle was joined. But where was the best place for the chaplain to locate himself and how far forward should he be

⁴²⁵ Rev R.J. Henderson, the Nicol Survey.

⁴²⁶ A Summary of the Experience in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, p.6.

in the order of battle? There was no time now for casual visitation and religious services. But what use was the chaplain as a non-combatant on the battlefield? Was he a danger to himself and other people? Could he not serve the cause better by volunteering for a full-time post as a stretcher bearer or even offer to take up arms in his own defence and in the defence of others?

In January 1922 an article appeared in the RACHD Journal which attempted to address the question of 'The Status and Work of the Chaplain.' The authors of this article quoted 'The Army Council Instruction' of 22 July 1922 which made the chaplain's situation clear: "A chaplain is given a position which is meant to enable him to minister alike to officers and men; he has a fair field and no favour; he is free to make the best use he can of his opportunities."⁴²⁷ They went on to argue that the chaplain cannot be a combatant or a full-time stretcher bearer because "his real 'status' is to show the value of his faith in daily life...one of the great lessons learned by the chaplains in the Great War was that they were to be ready to help men by every means to do their present duty...but the value of that help will depend entirely on our own personal relationship to God."⁴²⁸ The role of the chaplain as a noncombatant in the midst of battle, the morale of the troops and the ability of both chaplain and men to deal with danger and death are all intrinsically linked.

The chaplains of the Second Army, who fought in the campaign for Northwest Europe, were told that "their example can act either way for good or ill and it is for the chaplain to make sure that it is for good. He does not need to worry about whether a chaplain should be armed or not, for the example of an unarmed chaplain has proved of

⁴²⁷ H.W. Blackburne and F.M. Sykes, "The Status and Work of a Chaplain", article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.1, Jan 1922, p.1.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

more value than a battery of guns and under certain circumstances a good example is likely to prove of more value than a good sermon.”⁴²⁹

Fraser McLuskey never carried arms during his time as the SAS chaplain in enemy-occupied France: “I wasn't there as a fighting man but had my own job to do. I was the better able to do it because so far as possible I was sharing the life my 'flock' had to lead. I was the better able to do it because, unarmed, I represented the peace which the men knew well is God's will for a warring world.”⁴³⁰

The Rev John Birkbeck was a Church of Scotland chaplain attached to the Commando Forces during the Second World War. Here it was expected that the chaplain would accompany the assault troops going on raids. Not to go would have resulted in the chaplain forfeiting the men's respect. In reply to the Nicol Survey, Birkbeck stated quite firmly: “I cannot reconcile in any way to a chaplain bearing arms. As an ambassador of peace it would be an anachronism and a perversion of his calling to do so...a chaplain accepting the privilege of being with his men in battle has no mandate to go in armed.”⁴³¹

The Rev J. Oswald Welsh was the Scottish chaplain attached to the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry as part of the 11th Armoured Division. His good friend Steel Brownlie recalls how Oswald conducted his ministry in all phases of war as a noncombatant. On one occasion their armoured squadron came under enemy mortar fire when the padre was visiting: “A trooper who had dived under his tank with the rest of the crew stuck his head out and shouted, with a rich mixture of expletives, to the

⁴²⁹ Notes for Active Service Chaplains, April 1944, p.2.

⁴³⁰ McLuskey, *The Cloud and the Fire*, p.72.

⁴³¹ Rev John Birkbeck, the Nicol Survey, Stirling, 24 Aug 1979.

chaplain to take cover. Welsh replied: "Now McKinnon, you watch your language and anyway,(pointing to his dog-collar), I'm a noncombatant."⁴³²

In the heat of battle it was not always easy for the chaplain to stand passively by and not get involved in the action. Tommy Nicol admits that on two occasions he took up arms in anger: "Twice I found myself taking up a rifle with intent to kill: once at Sferro, and once at Brevil. Each time a man was wounded near me and needed attention, so the rifle was laid down."⁴³³ Similarly Murdo Ewen MacDonald, the Church of Scotland chaplain to 2 Para, found himself not only bearing arms but actually commanding a platoon when his battalion was decimated in action in North Africa. He was wounded twice before being captured by the Afrika Korps.

In all theatres of war the chaplain had to prepare himself for the battle. Others expected him to be "strong and of good courage" and some drew strength from the chaplain's example. Everybody in war is frightened at times, and the chaplain would not be alone in feeling afraid in some circumstances, but he was taught that he should not be frightened of being afraid: "It is a good thing to prepare in every way possible to meet these times," advised the Eighth Army Brotherhood, "so that the chaplains' example will be the greatest possible value to others."⁴³⁴ Chaplains everywhere, however, were warned against taking unnecessary risks. The Chaplains' Department could not afford unnecessary casualties. The injury or death of a chaplain on the field of battle could also have a devastating effect upon the morale of the troops.

Zero hour, in particular, was a crucial moment for the chaplain. According to the Brotherhood, "There is little more a chaplain can do at zero hour except be there;

⁴³² W. Steel Brownlie, in reply to an advertisement in Life and Work, Dec 1994.

⁴³³ T.J.T. Nicol, Survey Questionnaire.

⁴³⁴ A Summary of the Experiences in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains., p.7.

but in no other time or way will he win from a unit so much acceptance of himself and his ministry. By suffering with the men we bring them to God. No chaplain who has been with his unit in action regrets it. Some who were detached to dressing stations and 'B' Echelons regret it bitterly.”⁴³⁵ The presence of the chaplain in the midst of the battle had a great effect on the morale of many of the men. In October 1944 Brigadier E.H.A.J. O'Donnell chaired a meeting of the Morale Inter-Services Committee at the War Office. The topic of general consideration was the morale of the troops engaged in battle:

The first consideration in war must be the willingness of the forces to fight and to support those fighting...The failure to get the mails up regularly may ultimately contribute to defeat as surely as the failure to bring up petrol. A man who has used up all his ammunition can still fight with a bayonet if his heart is in the right place...In short morale is an operational factor and not just an administrative frill.⁴³⁶

It was the chaplain's job to stand beside those who did the fighting and to support them in their mission. A good chaplain could have a crucial impact upon the morale of the unit. The Army Training Memorandum of May 1940/41 laid down in principle that “the ultimate value of a weapon is inherent less in the weapon itself than in the fighting spirit of the man behind it. The qualities of heart, mind and age make the weapon go. Without them, it could provide no more than a temporary defence against the enemy.”⁴³⁷ The chaplain had an important operational role to play here.

One Regimental Medical Officer, Dr J.C.S. Jeffrey, remembered the Rev Arthur Dickson, Church of Scotland chaplain with the 56(Highland) Medium Regiment Royal Artillery in Belgium in 1940-41: “The fighting was fierce but during the battle our

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁴³⁶ War Office Document, Report of the Morale Inter-Services Committee, minute, 11 Oct 1944, PRO/WO/32/1194.

⁴³⁷ Middleton Brumwell, p.61.

Padre showed absolutely no fear and still went around and amongst us with the concern we had come to know so well.”⁴³⁸

In the Nicol survey the question was asked, “Did it make a difference having the Padre there, and if so, why?” Replies show quite clearly both the high regard and the impact upon morale that at least one chaplain had upon the men. D. Eggo from Forfar wrote: “the Padre on the battlefield gave you a feeling of extra security.” Reginald Figg of Perth recalls: “it made a big difference having a Padre there. He was quite a comfort.”⁴³⁹

Bob Burgess was the medical corporal attached to 126 (Highland) Field Regiment when one night during a heavy air raid near the Bayeux area he had to dive for cover: “I crawled under a low viaduct and crouched in the water feeling miserable and frightened. Then somewhere nearby I heard Padre Nicol's voice and felt comforted and reassured.”⁴⁴⁰ Likewise Major D.S. Macdonald from Edinburgh notes that in his experience “most soldiers on the surface at least are pretty irreligious but when faced with danger they tended to look to the Padre for that extra comfort and belief to keep going which is quite different to that given by the normal regimental officer.”⁴⁴¹

General Wimberley, who commanded the 1st Battalion of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in 1939, wrote to Tom Nicol stating that “in the front line fighting unit the regiment expects the Padre to face the same dangers to which they are exposed to in battle, and if by this means the Padre gets a reputation for bravery, his influence in the regiment, thereafter, increased enormously.” Wimberley went on to commend the bravery of Padre F.J.L. MacLauchlan who was the Church of Scotland

⁴³⁸ J.C.S. Jeffrey, in reply to an advertisement in Sunday Express, Edinburgh, 11 Nov 1994.

⁴³⁹D. Eggo and R. Figg, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁴⁰B. Burgess, the Nicol Survey.

chaplain with the 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders throughout the whole of World War Two: "It was Padre MacLauchlan who together with Captain White and Sgt McEvoy had so gallantly assisted with the evacuation of the wounded from the bridgehead across the Irrawaddy. A most modest, brave and unselfish man, he was extremely popular with all ranks. He won the M.C."⁴⁴²

A further reply from the Nicol Survey came from Graham Pilcher of Invergowrie. "On active service the padre is the visible and trusted link between the soldier and God and as such his presence at moments of greatest stress must be of much comfort. Of course it made a difference having the padre there...his continued survival was important to everyone in the battalion."⁴⁴³

The chaplain could influence morale and be a source of strength and encouragement to all ranks by being in the midst of the fighting. Yet one of his key roles was to help the men cope with danger, fear and death: "What a unique spiritual challenge and opportunity the modern Army presents to the Churches!", wrote Nevile Davidson. "An army of some two million men (apart from thousands of women); the majority of them soldiers not by profession but of necessity, of varying ages, drawn from every conceivable rank and sphere of life; some on active service overseas, facing danger, wounds, death..."⁴⁴⁴

The experience of chaplains with troops in action during the 1939-45 War would confirm that while fear of injury and death was an over riding principle, many men had a fairly fatalistic approach to life. "It is true," wrote D.S. Coey, "that when

⁴⁴¹ D.S. Macdonald, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁴² D. Wimberley, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁴³ G Pilcher, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁴⁴ N. Davidson, "The Modern Army and the Christian Faith," article, *Life and Work*, No.144, Dec 1941, p.249.

danger is present there is marked fatalism in the attitude of the fighting man, which contributes in no small degree to maintaining morale under stress and strain...This fatalism at least implies that we are killed if we are meant to be killed, and live if we are meant to live.”⁴⁴⁵

Again evidence from the Nicol Survey reveals the depth of fear and tension on the battlefield. Lt Col Alexander Brodie from Blairgowrie recalls: “The Church does come into its own in dangerous times...I was surprised how scared men were whom I knew to be normally much more courageous and self-confident than me.” Another anonymous respondent observed that “going into action was a traumatic experience. Something so horrific and tragic that even shortly after the war it was difficult to recall the experience and several years after the war, I realised that my mind refused to recall the horror. The nightmares that were quite common are now very rare.”⁴⁴⁶

As a noncombatant the chaplain could stand as an example to the men who did the fighting. It was his duty to share their dangers and their fears. To reassure them that whatever might happen be it injury, captivity or death, that God loved them and that God cared for them. There was little more that a chaplain could do at zero hour except be there, but his presence was good for the morale of the troops and some believed that if they were to fall in action they would at least be given a Christian burial by their Padre. It was the experience of many chaplains, and not least those who served with the Eighth Army, that “no chaplain who has been with his unit in action regrets it.”⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ D.S. Coey, “Eternal Life,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol. VIII, No.58, Sep 1954, p.43.

⁴⁴⁶ A. Brodie, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁴⁷ A Summary of the Experiences in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, p.6.

It was General Wimberley's belief that the brand of Christianity which the Padre professed became even less important in war-time: "The average man when dying cares little or nothing for the denomination of the Padre who is there with him, but much for having with him a man that he knows to be true and good, to help him die bravely."⁴⁴⁸

4. PRACTICAL SERVICE IN BATTLE

Once the battle is on, go all out to rally the shaken and to give wounded men a chance of life. The text is: "Take care of him." Get him to the Inn, the Medical Officer, Advanced Dressing Station, Main Dressing Station, where he can be looked after, for evil and not God is trying to take away his life. Let the Chaplain stand for life; he comes not to bury, but to save.⁴⁴⁹

Apart from providing a physical and spiritual presence on the battlefield many chaplains found a worthwhile role helping the Regimental Medical Officer care for the wounded, the scared and the dying. Indeed, in the view of Middleton Brumwell, "there were plenty of duties in a battle which a chaplain could undertake and find his hands full, and he should not be called away from his essential duties for duties which belong to others."⁴⁵⁰ Second Army chaplains were, however, warned that they must not be found wanting in the practical help they provided in battle and a knowledge of first aid was considered useful. Whatever he was called upon to do, the chaplain was advised to have prepared the line of thought suitable for this period: "What is he to say to the wounded? What is he to say to the dying? What can he do for these men? This hour should not find the chaplain unready, for his example is worth 'much fine gold'."⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ D. Wimberley, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁴⁹ A Summary of the Experiences in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, p.6.

⁴⁵⁰ Brumwell, p.38.

⁴⁵¹ Notes for Active Service Chaplains, p.6.

Scottish chaplains who served with combat units tended to base themselves in battle at the Regimental Aid Post (R.A.P.), the battalion or regiment's immediate first aid post. The Rev George Reid was chaplain to the Scots Guards from November 1940 to the end of the war:

In battle I was usually with the R.A.P. helping to give first aid, as well as dispensing hot sweet tea, sweets and cigarettes. At other times I would be in command of a half-track (part wheeled, part tracked armoured vehicle) with two medical orderlies, and accompany the leading squadron as far as possible into battle, being ready at hand to bring back casualties to the R.A.P.⁴⁵²

Reid believed that by getting involved with casualty evacuation he was identifying himself as closely as possible with the men who had to do the fighting. Years later when he analysed his war-time experience he realised that caring for the men was all important: "Looking back I believe I used to spend too long on sermon preparation. Preaching does not cut much ice under any conditions. Caring matters most."⁴⁵³

The situation called for practical service in many forms, including the rescue and carriage of a wounded man on a stretcher; help with immediate first aid; holding a torch for the doctor; giving cups of tea and cigarettes; helping the walking wounded; and preparing the more serious cases for the surgeon. Navigating convoys to the Main Dressing Station, securing personal belongings or promising to write to next of kin were also vitally important and practical functions which many chaplains undertook.

After one mission in France an SAS Sergeant Major called Reg Seekings was badly wounded. The chaplain, Fraser McLuskey, was in the R.A.P. with the Medical Officer when the casualty was brought in:

⁴⁵² G.T.H. Reid, "With the Scots Guards 1940-1945," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.XXII, No.113, May 1970, p.26.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.26.

It was fortunate that we had the doctor with us, and for the first time in my life I assisted at a surgical examination...with the somewhat uncertain light of a torch we found that a bullet had entered the back of the neck and lodged itself deeply near the base of the skull...⁴⁵⁴

On other occasion McLuskey filled the roles of both ambulance driver and interpreter:

It was a situation in which all hands were needed on deck. I would have served my friends very ill by neglecting the special duties of my calling, but it was equally clear to me that my calling could only be obeyed as I identified myself in fullest measure with the little group to whom I was appointed to minister.⁴⁵⁵

Wherever possible chaplains moved with their units or ministered to successive intakes of wounded at dressing stations. A number of Scottish chaplains were attached to the 1st Infantry Division in January 1944 prior to the battle for Anzio. The Rev A.H. Gibson recalls the tension prior to the invasion:

For the next few months it was to be a 'war of nerves', with infiltration, frequent shelling and air-raids. More ingenuity with a spade was needed than in Africa, and chaplains quickly developed new techniques for getting around and living hard. Men were looking for strength, and finding it in prayer...⁴⁵⁶

The Rev Roy Liddel, a minister of the Church of Scotland, landed with a Scottish battalion on the Anzio beachhead. Years later he recalled the scene:

The long drawn-out, eerie whine of shells that passed down the length of the wadies was a sound with which we soon became familiar. Along with the rattle of machine-guns, the rush of missiles directly overhead as they came from opposite directions, the heavy thuds and the buzz of flying metal fragments, it combined to make up a sinister orchestra.⁴⁵⁷

Liddel based himself at the R.A.P. where he spent part of each day and slept during most nights. During the battle he would help with the wounded but even the R.A.P. was not always the safest of places to be; inside the R.A.P, which would often be little

⁴⁵⁴ McLuskey, Parachute Padre, p.81.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.137.

⁴⁵⁶ A.H. Gibson, "Chaplains with the 1st Infantry Division, 1942-45," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.XVIII, No.95, Dec 1963, p.5.

⁴⁵⁷ R. Liddel, "Some Memories of Anzio," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.XXII, No.111, May 1969, p.31.

more than a tent, a barn or a derelict building, casualties might occur: "One night when the Medical Officer and seven of his staff were in it, it was struck by a mortar-bomb. Four were killed, and the doctor and the other three badly wounded."⁴⁵⁸

Doctor Hector MacDonald of Strathaven landed on Sword beach on the afternoon of D Day. He vividly remembered the Scottish chaplain attached to 41 Commando Royal Marines with whom he worked from D+1 (7 June 1944):

For five days and nights we worked constantly together, never sleeping. He was a tower of strength and brought great comfort to the wounded and dying. And to me. On D+6 there was a meeting held to nominate men for immediate awards. I recommended my padre. I saw him six weeks later wearing the ribbon of the Distinguished Service Cross. After all these years I've forgotten the name of the padre. But I'll never forget his bravery on Sword beach.⁴⁵⁹

Another veteran of World War Two, John Copland, a soldier with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, recalled a padre he met in a field dressing station where he was brought after being wounded: "I was badly shot up and had a lot of patching up to be done. After it I had a very bad night. I'd seen a padre about but what mattered to me was that he came to me about 3 am, said a prayer and calmed me down."⁴⁶⁰

Finally Major Mason, formerly battalion Intelligence Officer of the 2nd battalion the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in the 15th (Scottish) Division recalled how the Church of Scotland Chaplain called Ross [initials unknown] teamed up with Dr J.E. Anderson, the Regimental Medical Officer, in their battlefield duties. "They were a great pair and were seldom separated...One night the Medical Officer and the padre went out to bring in the Signal Sergeant who had been wounded by an anti-personnel mine in the midst of a mine field. The Commanding Officer sent for them and gave

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p.33.

⁴⁵⁹ Dr H. Macdonald, reply to an advertisement in the Sunday Express, 8 Nov 1994. Unfortunately Macdonald could not remember the name of the padre whom he served with on Sword beach.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., reply by John R. Copland, 7 Nov 1994.

them both a rocket for being foolish...Later the C.O. wrote a glowing report on the padre and the MO asking for a decoration but the reply came back from the Army, 'they were just doing their job'."⁴⁶¹

There was a great deal that the chaplain could do in a practical way to aid the wounded: the friendly face and warm smile; the comforting word, a prayer or blessing; the physical touch of a handshake or a cup of tea or a light cigarette - all were welcomed by the men. The chaplain used the RAP as a home base but many ventured forward and worked tirelessly to bring in the wounded and bury the dead. They could be a great help to the doctor, as together they ministered to body and soul.

Minds as well as bodies cried out for help, as illustrated by the experience of chaplains in the Eighth Army. The remorse of sin, the need of forgiveness, the dread of loneliness and the need for a divine presence were all real fears amongst the fighting troops. Men were anxious about home and loved ones left behind. They were frightened of letting the side down and failing to do their duty. They knew their friends and colleagues depended upon them. The padres often brought comfort and reassurance. On 31 July 1944 the Rev W.D Maxwell, Senior chaplain of the Scottish Division, wrote to Padre George Monro, who had been wounded on the field of battle and evacuated back to Britain. Maxwell assured Monro that he was still very much in their thoughts but the good work of the Scottish chaplains continued in his absence: "The chaplains are still doing magnificently, and if subalterns are praising them, then what they are accomplishing must be remarkable."⁴⁶²

5. RECONSTRUCTIVE COMPANIONSHIP IN THOUGHT AFTER ACTION.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., reply by Major E.S.L. Mason, late D.C.L.I. Suffolk, 8 May 1995.

⁴⁶² W.D. Maxwell, letter to George Monro, 31 July 1944, from Headquarters, 15th (Scottish) Division, British Land Army, G. Monro papers in private collection.

Further back in the Main Dressing Station and Casualty Clearing Section, and later on in the forward units, men begin to recover from stimulus and shock and suffer from reaction. Then our text is: "Whilst he was yet a great way off the Father saw him." Start at once to reconstruct men's outlook, purpose, balance and equanimity, and to release into their hearts the calm of God. "He set my feet upon a rock and ordered my goings."⁴⁶³

All Commanding Officers in peace or in war carry an enormous responsibility for the well-being of their soldiers. The chaplain and the medical officer were amongst the few who could get alongside the C.O. and support him in his work. Soldiers of the First World War scorned the senior officer who planned an attack that went wrong or resulted in heavy casualties. The poet and First World War veteran, Siegfried Sassoon, expressed the scorn in his memorable lines:

Good-morning; good -morning! the General said
When we met him last week on our way up the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
"He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack
As they flogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

All wars test men's personal values and raise questions about religion and the existence of God. The pre-deployment training phase and the Padre's Hour gave the chaplains opportunities to discuss eternal things. The lull in the battle or the cessation of hostilities caused the soldiers to take stock of what had happened and what was yet to come. The chaplain in the war-time situation had a vitally important role to play in supporting the fighting men in this particular phase of war. It was generally the chaplain who quietly and diligently went about doing his business, often apparently unnoticed, who was the most successful and the most appreciated. By their deeds they were known.

⁴⁶³ A Summary of the Experiences in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, p.7.

Mick Baker-Baker was a former Black Watch Commanding Officer who believed that the relationship between the C.O. and the padre was vitally important: “The C.O. needs four key men on whom he can depend in order to keep his ear close to the ground and know what is going on. They are, but not in order of priority, his Adjutant, the RSM, the Padre and the MO.”⁴⁶⁴ Similarly Brigadier B.L. Bradford was equally sure that the padre was vital to the C.O., particularly after a battle:

I think that a good padre is a most valuable asset in a battalion being someone in whom both officers and jocks can confide, being a sort of link with one's home life and peace. A good padre has his finger on the pulse of the battalion and can warn the C.O. in good time if the morale of a unit is not as high as the C.O. thinks.⁴⁶⁵

Colonel A.I.R. Murray of the Cameron Highlanders was given some sound advice on assuming command in regard to his relationship with the padre: “I was advised always to trust my own judgment when I differed from a ‘professional’ adviser, with the exception of the MO and the padre. ‘Disregard your MO and chaplains’ advice at your peril, they know their business best.”⁴⁶⁶ Many senior officers confided in and listened carefully to the advice given to them by the chaplains. On the other hand there was a great responsibility upon the chaplain not to be found wanting but to live up to the commander’s expectations.

Field Marshall Sir James Cassels and many other senior Scottish officers of the Second World War had high expectations of the Chaplains' Department and were quick to get rid of any man who did not come up to their standards. Cassels remarked:

Whenever I commanded anything I always tried to make friends with and see regularly my “head priest.” If he was good I got a splendid insight into what was happening and what was good and what was bad and where the shoe

⁴⁶⁴ Colonel Mick Baker-Baker, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁶⁵ Brigadier B.L. Bradford, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁶⁶ Colonel A.I.R. Murray, the Nicol Survey.

pinched. If he was bad, it was a waste of time and I tried to get rid of him, after I had told him what I thought and given him a chance to improve.⁴⁶⁷

The same point was made by Field Marshall The Lord Carver in his reply to the Nicol Survey in 1979: "When I was supported in war or peace by a good chaplain, whatever his denomination I welcomed it, was grateful and gave him my support. But when he was a weak and tiresome character I did my best to get rid of him."⁴⁶⁸ Previously in his letter to Nicol, Lord Carver admitted that he was not a religious man but realised the full worth of a good chaplain:

Although as a young man I was religious...I am not a godly or God fearing man and have very ambivalent views about the value of religion. However, from the commander's point of view, the chaplain's contribution is not a religious one. The advantage of the battalion chaplain, as of the doctor, was that he was not in the chain of command. He was able to move among the soldiers in an uncommitted way and was somebody who could give one an independent view of how they were feeling. He was a sort of psychiatric counsellor.⁴⁶⁹

After a major battle or a lull in the fighting there was plenty for the chaplain to do supporting the men and officers and keeping the commander fully briefed as to their state of mind. This period of reconstructive companionship was vitally important for both chaplain and men.

A.I. Dunlop was chaplain to 10th Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry during the Second World War and enjoyed the support of all his Commanding Officers: "Through Normandy, France, Lille, Belgium, Holland and Germany I was very close to all the officers. I was very fortunate and very close to all the Colonels I served with."⁴⁷⁰ Fraser McLuskey was equally fortunate in the Special Forces where his first Commanding Officer was the legendary SAS leader Blair Mayne: "Blair Mayne

⁴⁶⁷ Field Marshall Sir James Cassels, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁶⁸ Field Marshall The Lord Carver, the Nicol Survey.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

was a shy and inhibited man who found release in drinking more than he should have done. He had only a small group of close friends. He didn't mix naturally with the wider world." McLuskey became a close friend of Mayne and eventually was to bury him in his native Northern Ireland some years after the war. On reflection McLuskey knew that Mayne had a respect for the Christian faith: "He wasn't a regular worshipper anywhere. He had a profound respect for the work of the chaplain and was helpful in every possible way."⁴⁷¹

Not all Commanding Officers however established a good working relationship with the padre. Some were too busy, too caught up with operational demands to be bothered with a chaplain. Others had little time for chaplains in general and certainly had no time for those who were not up to the job. Tommy Nicol remembers how vastly important the relationship was between the C.O. and the padre but equally he recalled a "Gordon's battalion where the C.O. had no time for chaplains and therefore decided to do without one." In his own experience Nicol was used as a confidant of the C.O.: "At 6 o'clock each evening after the orders group I would go up to see the C.O. in his tent and we would talk about everything and anything."⁴⁷² The chaplain was the only person who could meet the C.O. on his own ground, regardless of rank and be a companion to him.

Other chaplains however did not enjoy a good relationship with the C.O. and this was often made worse by the shock of battle. "The relationship," according to Robert Craig was very important. "If the chaplain did not get on with the C.O. he

⁴⁷⁰ A.I. Dunlop, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 27 Oct 1993.

⁴⁷¹ J.F. McLuskey, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 15 Sep 1993.

⁴⁷² T.J.T. Nicol, Taped interview, Comrie, 17 Dec 1993.

must either get on or get out...Fault is a purely academic question.”⁴⁷³ One Scottish chaplain who certainly did not establish a good working relationship with one of his Commanding Officers was the Rev Gillies MacNab. From the outset he was a reluctant chaplain who found Army service a great personal strain. In his first unit, the 101st Anti-Aircraft Regiment, there was a change in Commanding Officer and immediately the padre and the new C.O. had a clash of personality. MacNab believed that the relationship between the C.O. and the chaplain was very important but only if relations were harmonious:

I never saw eye to eye with the new Commanding Officer and he sacked me...[MacNab was swiftly moved to another unit.] I was struck by the undemocratic procedures of the Army. The men were not consulted...I admit I was wrong but I was very hurt by the whole experience.⁴⁷⁴

When the battle slackened or ended the chaplain faced new conditions. The trauma, shock and burden of warfare left many men suffering physically, mentally and spiritually. Some were asking deep theological questions about the existence of God and how an all-loving God could allow such things to happen? Others had their faith shattered; some experienced God's love for the first time in their lives. Values were put to the test and an indwelling sense of one's mortality came sharply into focus. “The natural feeling of relief,” the chaplain was told, “must be coupled with the sense of the mercies of God.”⁴⁷⁵

The Rev H.L. Adamson was the Scottish Presbyterian chaplain attached to the 32nd (British) General Hospital which was the psychiatric hospital for the 21st Army Group. It was here that soldiers suffering from battle exhaustion in the Normandy

⁴⁷³ R. Craig, Taped interview, Falkland, 6 July 1994.

⁴⁷⁴ G. Macnab, Taped interview, Broughtyferry, 5 July 1994.

⁴⁷⁵ Notes for Active Service Chaplains, p.7.

campaign were treated. The team of chaplains at this hospital came to the conclusion that the best results in dealing with battle exhaustion could only be obtained when there was close cooperation between clergy and doctors. For it was discovered “that battle exhaustion patients were nearly always very accessible on the spiritual side.”⁴⁷⁶

It was the experience of a number of hospital chaplains that “many patients asked for prayer, and nearly always requested that men from the line and their own particular friends should specially be remembered. The comradeship amongst these men was striking...They were particularly sensitive to the sufferings of others...The death or mutilation of a friend was a source of the deepest distress to many.”⁴⁷⁷ Soldiers suffering from battle shock could be quieted by the reassurance of the presence of God and the utterance of a quick prayer. In the view of J.A. Sime, “the mere fact that they knew we were padres seemed to have a steadying effect upon them...battle exhaustion casualties, in the early stages, do not worry about intellectual problems in religion. They have prayed to God in distress and do not doubt His existence.”⁴⁷⁸

There seems little doubt that war tested men's values and their awareness of religion. The Irish Presbyterian chaplain David Henderson believed that “the men were appreciative of the chaplain. If he was helpful to them they responded, but none of them were gospel greedy...They were not interested in denomination. They wanted to see you as a man first and as a man of God second. If you could live and work with them anything was possible.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ J.A. Sime, “Battle Exhaustion,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol. VII, No.53, Oct 1952, p.343.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.344.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.345.

⁴⁷⁹ D. Henderson, Taped interview, Glen Isla, 7 July 1994.

It was Ian Dunlop's experience that the level of belief amongst the men was difficult to determine: "As part of Army life the men grew into the situation they found themselves in. Most religion in the Army is unconsciously received rather than consciously taught."⁴⁸⁰ But whether a man was religious or not his personal standards and values were put to the test.

David Whiteford was chaplain to the 5th battalion of the Black Watch and the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards during the 1939-45 war. His noncombatant experience proved to him that "war x-rays a man's soul" leaving him with needs and questions that only the chaplain can address:

In battle all superficialities of life have been stripped away. You do not know whether you will survive the next day or not...it could have been me...there is an openness to that reality and the chaplain is the only person who can speak to that reality...the faces of the men told of the reality of the war...it is unforgettable and God touches men in these situations. The chaplain who has gone through the campaign is the only person a man can turn to, because whether you like it or not you are part of that experience...Ministry in battle is beyond comprehension.⁴⁸¹

Professor J.K.S. Reid, reflecting in 1994 on his war-time experience as a parachute chaplain, believed that war heightened the need for religion among many men. "It was not a universal phenomenon but, being abroad, with families at home, raised the need for a common link through an Almighty presence. This was something which gave men a respect for religion and the church."⁴⁸² Reid was certain that the experience of war tested personal values. "It tested the values that you had and you learned new ones..."⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ A. I. Dunlop, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 27 Oct 1993.

⁴⁸¹ D.H. Whiteford, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 29 Oct 1993.

⁴⁸² J.K.S. Reid, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

It was the Rev Murdo Ewen MacDonald's (later Professor at Glasgow) belief that war and danger "made men more sensitive to religion." But he was certain that the experience of military chaplaincy in war-time changed him personally, for here his own values and standards were put to the test: "I returned from the war less judgemental than I had been when I joined. The reason was that I had sorted out my values because I had seen men die magnificently and with great courage."⁴⁸⁴

Perhaps one of the most eloquent comments about the work and worth of Scottish chaplains during the war was that many men, years later, could recall their efforts but not their names. For example, Charles Framp, a private soldier in 6 Black Watch, recalled:

I am not and never have been a religious believer...in the Black Watch during the war we had a very great respect for our padre of the time...I cannot remember his name ...but I do remember him as a very brave man, always willing to spare time to comfort and help those amongst us who felt they had need of his help.⁴⁸⁵

Another Scottish veteran, W. Thomson, wrote that "I was to see and learn, among other things, the respect and admiration that was given to the battalion padre, whose name to my shame and sorrow, I have now forgotten, but whose presence and influence within the battalion was considerable."⁴⁸⁶

Away from the front line the chaplains continued to work ministering to the needs of others. The war weary, the wounded, the bereaved and the lost all needed the chaplain's time. By being with the men in battle he had ready access after the battle to their hearts and minds. He brought to their violent world a message of peace and calm. He had an important role to play in helping men relax and to unburden themselves in

⁴⁸⁴ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

⁴⁸⁵ Charles Framp, reply to an advertisement in the regimental magazines of the Scottish Division, South Humberside, 16 June 1995.

⁴⁸⁶ W. Thomson, reply to an advertisement in the Sunday Express, Irvine, Nov 1994.

preparation for the next encounter. After six weeks constant fighting in Normandy, Tommy Nicol was showing signs of battle shock and near exhaustion. He began to shake at every loud noise and had to be persuaded that his personality was beginning to change and that he too needed a rest. He was weary of war. In one battle in Normandy over 250 men from Nicol's battalion of about 600 men were killed. Such was the loss that a bulldozer had to be found to dig a mass grave. The burial of old friends and comrades on the field of battle was sure to take its toll. As another former Church of Scotland chaplain, George Monro, recalled, "it was a bloody business and very wearying."⁴⁸⁷ The chaplain now had to face the aftermath of battle and the burial of the dead.

6. THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

This goes on all through the battle. Death takes second place to life; but at the end see that all the dead are buried. The men, still more their families, have a strong desire to be buried by a chaplain with prayer and love as a child of God. To bury a man reverently, secure the future recognition of the grave, and preserve a true record of his passing is no small service to him and his family.⁴⁸⁸

In the height of battle the dead would be gathered together and buried nearby at the most suitable opportunity. It was the chaplain's responsibility to ensure that after the battle all burials were properly recorded, personal effects properly secured and letters written to each of the soldiers' next of kin. The funeral service was the final act of loyalty that any soldier could pay to a fallen comrade. Rarely did the chaplain struggle to find men to dig graves or to assist in a burial service even under the threat of enemy fire.

⁴⁸⁷ G. Monro, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

⁴⁸⁸ A Summary of the Experience in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, p.7.

It was not only the friends of the dead who appreciated the services of the chaplain at these burials. Many families in Scotland were relieved to learn that their relatives were buried where they fell by a Scottish minister. There was comfort and reassurance in receiving a letter from a chaplain recording the death and knowing that things had been properly done. The initial shock of receiving the dreaded telegram saying that a loved one had been wounded, killed or was missing was addressed in some small way by the action and ministrations of the minister who had stood alongside those who had fought and died.

The chaplains of the Second Army were instructed that regardless of circumstance all dead soldiers deserved a proper field burial: “No chaplain should allow himself to forget that the men he buries on operations have made the supreme sacrifice for the cause in which our country is at war. If this is remembered, the care and reverence given to this service will always create the right atmosphere for the burial party.”⁴⁸⁹

The Chaplains’ Department in accordance with War Office instruction laid down very clear guidelines for the burial of all dead soldiers, regardless of denomination or nationality.⁴⁹⁰ For each death a “Burial Returns Form” had to be completed and processed by the soldier’s unit as a matter of urgency. This form would result in the next of kin being notified and the dead man’s grave being properly marked and recorded. Where possible a dead soldier had to be buried by a chaplain of his own denomination but it was realised that this would not always be possible. The Chaplains’ Department made every effort to ensure that Scottish battalions and regiments were

⁴⁸⁹ Notes for Active Service Chaplains, p.4.

⁴⁹⁰ Chaplains buried all dead soldiers and any personal details were recorded and sent to a central graves registration department where information was exchanged between the opposing forces.

adequately covered by a chaplain from the same religious background and tradition as the majority of the men.

When the bodies of allied or enemy dead were recovered, these too were to be given a decent Christian burial and particulars of the deceased properly recorded and sent to the Graves Registration and Enquiry Unit. For the enemy dead a shortened order of funeral service was approved which included: "The Lord's Prayer, Committal and the Grace."⁴⁹¹ Wherever possible the chaplain was to write to all next of kin as soon as possible. Some Scottish chaplains who were German-speakers, like the Rev J.K.S. Reid, wrote to the relatives of German POWs who died in captivity.

It is unknown how many Scotsmen died in battle but there are some records for Scottish Chaplains who were killed in action. In May 1941 the Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to HM Forces reported to the General Assembly that "fifty-two ministers of the Church of Scotland served with the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1940; that three were killed in action or died of wounds, and that seven were taken prisoners of war."⁴⁹²

On 17 November 1943 it was recorded in the minutes of the Church of Scotland Chaplains Committee that four more ministers of the Church had been wounded, were missing or had died. A War Office official document recording battle casualties for Northern France in 1944 stated that as of 20 November 1944 the RACHD losses were twenty one dead; forty seven wounded; twelve missing and one taken as a POW.⁴⁹³ Finally, in May 1946 the General Assembly heard the names of

⁴⁹¹Notes for Active Service Chaplains, p.13.

⁴⁹² Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, Reports, May 1941, p.498.

⁴⁹³ War Office Document "Battle Casualties in Northern France 1944," PRO WO3211172.

eighteen Church of Scotland ministers who lost their lives while on service as chaplains during the war.

The losses amongst some Scottish battalions were particularly high after D Day. Tommy Nicol, chaplain to 5 Black Watch, recorded the fact that: "by June 14, the battalion had lost six officers and 92 other ranks killed and 11 officers and 198 other ranks wounded - 307 casualties out of a landing strength of less than 500."⁴⁹⁴ The recovery of the dead and the accurate recording of the grave site was the responsibility of the Adjutant assisted by the chaplain. Many Scottish chaplains could tell harrowing tales of the greatest devotion to duty in their recovery and burial of the fallen.

Roy Liddel was a Church of Scotland chaplain who saw service at Anzio in February and March 1944. In an article to the RACHD Journal in 1969, he recalled with vivid detail the gruesome nature of his work burying the dead. He remembered how it was not possible always to recover bodies from forward positions right away and how they lay where they fell until the tide of battle moved forward. Some were buried by the Germans in the mean-time. When a body was recovered it was wrapped in a blanket, along with some means of identification and the grave site marked by a cross bearing the man's name and army number, his regiment and the date of his death. It was not uncommon to bury several men in one grave but at all times dignity and due reverence were paid.

Liddel recalled how frequently he buried men where they lay and how together with the medical officer they sought to collect all the human remains they could find and to bury them. Liddel later wrote:

⁴⁹⁴ T.J.T. Nicol, "D Day Remembered," article, Life and Work, June 1994, p.15.

The strangest funeral at which I ever officiated was that of a man in a forward position whose slit trench received a direct hit and caved in, killing him ...the place could not be reached by day, but when darkness came I crawled out behind the man's platoon officer, who guided me to the spot. We both lay flat and kept our steel helmets on while I stuck a cross in the ground beside the dead soldier's head and spoke in a low voice the words of committal.⁴⁹⁵

There were all too many such gruesome moments on the field of battle. Yet there was consolation for the officers and men to know that their chaplain was willing to bury their dead.

Another Scottish chaplain, the Rev George Reid, saw war service with the Scots Guards from November 1940 until August 1945. During this time the battalion were re-rolled and were trained to be part of the Guards Armoured Division. One benefit of being in an armoured unit was that casualties were generally lighter than amongst dismounted infantry. Yet when a tank or armoured vehicle was hit, the devastation was horrific. As George Reid recalled, "Nothing I had been taught, heard or imagined, prepared me for the harsh realities when a tank was 'Brewed up'."⁴⁹⁶

Often the bodies could only be extracted from the burnt-out hulls under cover of darkness. The difficulty and gruesomeness of this task in the dark was appalling. Of one particular occasion he wrote:

With a sergeant and six guardsmen, I toiled through the night on two successive days. The dead were collected and buried in a mass grave. At last the work was completed, or so I thought. The next morning...the Adjutant horrified me by telling me that in the daylight it was obvious that several bodies were still in the tanks reported to me as having been cleared.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ R. Liddel, "Some Memories of Anzio," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.XXII, No.111, May 1969, p.35.

⁴⁹⁶ G.T.H. Reid, "With the Scots Guards, 1940-1945," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol.XXII, No.113, May 1970, p.25.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26.

Reid recalled this incident with a degree of shame (as he had failed to find these men) whilst at the same time saying that burials were the most trying part of his duties as a war-time chaplain.

The efforts of many Scottish chaplains to recover and bury the dead were appreciated by many officers and men. Steel Brownlie was a Squadron Officer in the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, where Oswald Welsh was the Church of Scotland chaplain. Brownlie wrote in the history of this regiment how one day in Normandy they came across the bodies of a number of dead Canadians killed in a minefield:

They had lain in the heat for a week at least and were bloated and stinking. The Padre (Welsh) picked his way among them, at each reaching down between the brown shirt and the purple flesh to pull out a name tag. At a safe distance, a few tank crews stood horrified, waiting for a mine to explode and blow the padre's leg off. None did. When he was finished, he explained: "The relatives will have to know."⁴⁹⁸

To preserve a true record of a soldier's passing was no small service to him and to his family.

Sometimes the bodies of dead soldiers had to be re-interred from the temporary graves in which they were laid in the heat of battle and moved to a permanent war cemetery. Colonel Robert Gurdon of the Black Watch wrote in the obituary to the Rev Joseph Grant, Church of Scotland chaplain to 6 Black Watch throughout the war, how he had been an invaluable help in this gruesome task:

After the great battle of Cassino in early 1943 the bodies in temporary graves had to be lifted and moved to a permanent war cemetery. I did not like the thought of our chaps being dug up without the padre being present and, unpleasant as the task was, I asked Joe...he agreed at once and I felt sure that everything would be done with due reverence and in a way that families would have approved.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ W.Steel Brownlie, reply to an advertisement in the Sunday Express, West Kilbride, 18 Dec 1994.

⁴⁹⁹ Colonel R.T.T. Gurdon, reply to an advertisement in the Red Hackle, the Regimental Magazine of the Black Watch, 4 Jan 1995.

For the Rev David Whiteford dealing with casualties and burying men that he had got to know well during his military service was very difficult. In the Scottish battalion in which he served the Pipe Major and the pipers were tasked to help the chaplain with burial details. On one occasion the 5th Battalion Black Watch Orders group where the C.O. and his officers were planning the next phase of the battle was shelled. Whiteford and the Pipe Major went to recover the bodies but when they got to the barn that had been hit and saw the carnage and devastation that lay before them, the Pipe Major said: "Padre, this is no a job for young pipers, you and me will just have to do this ourselves...."⁵⁰⁰ Whiteford realised that he would just have to get on with it but it was a strain burying the remains of men beside whom on the previous day he had sat at breakfast.

One final incident in the work Scottish chaplains undertook burying the dead comes from the war-diary of the Rev David Cairns. Serving as chaplain with an artillery regiment he normally found himself well back from the enemy front lines and was able to wear full clerical robes at field burials. In his war diary for Thursday 12 October 1944 Cairns wrote:

After lunch a Lieutenant came to me to go to take a funeral of a man of his who had been killed...I took my robes, service book and tin hat and drove with him to the burial site...I put on my robes because I felt that the more seemly a funeral could be made, the more fitting, just as it was right to make the graves as tidy as possible...⁵⁰¹

On two occasions Cairns records how other Scottish chaplains came to see him during the fighting to try and unburden themselves of the enormous strain that they carried from burying the dead. On 22 September 1944 the chaplain of the King's Own

⁵⁰⁰ D.H. Whiteford, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 29 Oct 1993.

⁵⁰¹ Cairns, War Diary, National Library of Scotland, Accession no. 5932.

Scottish Borderers (KOSB) came to see Cairns and described the stress and strain on the officers and men of his battalion after they had sustained 110 casualties in the battle for the Gheel Bridgehead. The KOSB chaplain explained: "It's all right for a time, but then it gets you down, and people tell you, Padre, there are bodies of some of our chaps there, will you go and see to them being brought back, and I'm afraid the moment might come when I say "I'm not going."⁵⁰² It was Cairns' contention that the strain of battle and dealing with the dead was compounded by the fact that the chaplain was unarmed and could not fight back.

On another occasion the Rev David Mackean, the Church of Scotland chaplain to the Glasgow Highlanders, came to see David Cairns after he had been taking some burials of men in no man's land: "The burials he had to attend to were of men who had already turned quite black. Mackean was rather shaken and he said that he could not sleep. He had had two days of this. The RC Padre had refused point blank to do the burying, and had given the troops who did it a bottle of whiskey...I repeat this incident (Cairns wrote in his diary), for there is a great deal of (often undeserved) praise of the RC padres at the expense of our own."⁵⁰³

The burial of the dead was the chaplain's main responsibility in the aftermath of battle. He was the one to whom the men turned for support and practical help to give their fallen colleagues a decent Christian burial. It was important that the soldiers could see their dead comrades properly buried but it was equally important for the morale of the men to know that if they too were to be killed on the battlefield that they also would be properly laid to rest.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 20 Sep 1944, p.122.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 16 Oct 1944, p.136.

After the burial the chaplains would write to the next of kin often describing the courage of those who died and how their friends and colleagues had buried them. When a churchyard or cemetery was not used, the chaplain would pick the best possible spot for the burial. It was often a comfort to the relatives to know that Scottish soldiers were buried by Scottish ministers. Perhaps it was the next best thing to having the body repatriated.

The burial of the dead was not a pleasant task. Mutilated and decaying bodies had to be gathered together, wrapped in a blanket and placed in a shallow grave. The personal cost to the chaplains was profound. They were expected to cope. It was their job. Regardless of age or experience they had to muster the courage and face occasional danger to carry out this important function. The time to give thanks to God for safe deliverance and the bravery of those who died would be the chaplain's next duty.

7. THE EPILOGUE. THANKSGIVING AND MEMORIAL SERVICE.

When a phase of the campaign is over, gather in its experience. Thanksgiving and memorial services meet a real and ready response. Men want to thank God that the cause is safe, that no man died in vain or suffered uncomforted; for the bravery whereby we stand, for grace received and many things personal. They wish to ask God to help the wounded, reward the dead, and solace the bereaved; and they will offer Him, if given the chance, a much purified resolution to carry on to Victory, and place it in His hands.⁵⁰⁴

This final section tests the advice gathered from the experiences of the chaplains who served with the Eighth Army in the desert between Alamein and Tripoli, 1942-43. It will concentrate upon not just the plaudits of praise and thanksgiving for the souls lost and the victory achieved, but will also focus upon some of the criticisms which Scottish soldiers raised against their chaplains in the 1939-45 War. Even the most

⁵⁰⁴ A Summary of the Experience in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, p.7.

irreligious attended the final thanksgiving services to mark their respect for the fallen and to pause and reflect on their own deliverance. But equally the irreligious as well as those faithful to the Church were at times highly critical of the chaplain's performance. It was also the time when chaplains reflected on their own experience and to a man they began to think about demobilisation

It was the considered opinion of the Rev J.W.J. Steele, the Assistant Chaplain General of the Second Army, in his notes to chaplains (April 1944) that care had to be taken to make the service of thanksgiving meaningful:

The spirit of the thanksgiving service should not be confined to "deliverance" or of a "memorial" having in mind those who have fallen, but it should include the thought of having been weighed in the balance and not been found wanting. A chaplain shares equally with his men all the varying experiences of the battlefield, and this is a link between him and them for ever.⁵⁰⁵

Throughout his war-time ministry the Rev A.I. Dunlop held services of thanksgiving whenever appropriate for his Scottish soldiers. On Sunday 3 January 1943 his diary records the New Year address that he gave to the men of the 10th Highland Light Infantry. His text was: "Praise ye the Lord." And he developed the text by highlighting the need for thanksgiving to God for the New Year and the hope of peace ahead. He told the men that their heritage must be preserved and that was the only thing worth dying for. Thirdly he also wanted them to "see to it that the things we fight for are the things of God."⁵⁰⁶ On Sunday 16 May 1943 Dunlop held another thanksgiving service, this time for the victory in North Africa. Here he urged the men of the Highland Light Infantry to "keep the faith...Do your duty...and all will be well."⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Notes for Active Service Chaplains, p.7.

⁵⁰⁶ A.I. Dunlop, *War Diary*, 3 Jan 1943.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1943.

It was the services at the end of the war which most men later remembered. The Second Army even published an order of service for use by chaplains to mark the end of the War. It was a service of hymns and prayers designed to remember fallen comrades, and to dedicate those who had survived to draw on the experience of war and to live better and more faithful lives in the future.

One Scottish soldier vividly recalled years later, one such service that he attended. W. Thomson who had enlisted in the Spring of 1943 wrote:

The end of the European War came in May 1945 and with it the enormous sense of joy and relief we felt as individuals that we had been spared. In his religious services in the immediate aftermath, the padre, was able to express our feelings about comrades who had not survived and in so doing he said in a truly Christian way, what most of us would have found difficult.⁵⁰⁸

Some men, however, were more critical about the failure of the chaplains. Allan Waterston who served with a Territorial Army Armoured Regiment in North Africa and Italy wrote that “our padre, tried to be one of the boys and failed completely to gain any respect either with the men or the officers.” He went on to say that “I never met an RC padre that was not respected...sadly not all Church of England or Church of Scotland padres seemed to earn the love and respect of their war-time flock. Broadly they were either too saintly or they were rogues.”⁵⁰⁹ Another veteran, John Copland, who saw service with the Scottish Division and who knew a number of Church of Scotland padres observed that “I met several padres in my six years and eight months war service. Some good and some bad. We all could relate to the 'human' ones but failed to get a good relationship with those who thought more about the rites of the Church.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ W.Thomson, reply to an advertisement in the Sunday Express, Irvine, Nov 1994.

⁵⁰⁹ A.K. Waterston, reply to an advertisement in the Sunday Express, Lymington, 23 Nov 1994.

⁵¹⁰ J.R. Copland, reply to an advertisement in the Sunday Express, Wigtownshire, 7 Nov 1994.

Despite these criticisms, many chaplains did their best in the most trying of situations. They worked hard to bring a message of love and peace to a situation that was surrounded by bloodshed and death. But however unpleasant war was, it was capable of bringing out the best in most people. This applied equally to padres, and many of those who served with the Scottish Battalions of the Second World War found the experience both broadening and enriching. Many later would confess that they were better men as a result of their war-time ministry.

The end of hostilities did not mean the end of the chaplain's work. For some it was merely the beginning. The immediate priorities were the burial and occasionally re-burial of the dead and the services of thanksgiving for times past and for the days that lay ahead. Memorial services were important because they allowed soldiers to stand shoulder to shoulder and to give thanks for victory and the unselfish sacrifice of fallen colleagues. They were equally important for families to know that their loved ones had not died in vain. To ease the pain of loss many Scottish chaplains took the opportunity to ask God's help for the wounded, the comfort of the bereaved and to thank God for those who had lived and died on the field of battle. The chaplains of the Eighth Army were convinced that this final phase of war was vital for the morale and well being of the troops.

At the end of his advice to chaplains on the seven phases of war, Frank Hughes the Assistant Chaplain General of the Eighth Army and later Chaplain General wrote: "A Chaplain who follow these phases through will always know what he is trying to do, will have no vacant mind, no lack of work, no idle moments, but a fine, full task demanding all his energy and skill."⁵¹¹ General Montgomery commented on Hughes'

⁵¹¹ A Summary of the Experiences in the Field of the Eighth Army Brotherhood of Chaplains, with hand-written notes by Hughes and Montgomery.

advice to chaplains in the following terms: "I have read this with great interest and commend it to all chaplains. A chaplain who follows the above advice will have done well and will earn the love of his men - which is a pearl of very great price."⁵¹²

⁵¹² Ibid., Comment by Montgomery.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MINISTRY IN THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

1939-45.

On 22 October 1940, General Montgomery went to All Saints Cathedral, Cairo, to address a group of chaplains serving in the Middle East. In his address he pointed out that “this was a war of morale and of spirit, more than any war in history. Our task [referring to the chaplains] was to strengthen the spirit of men...”⁵¹³ There were few more important places that the chaplain of the Second World War served, few places where he was better in a position to maintain the spirit of the men, than in the Prisoner of War (POW) camps in both Europe and in the Far East. Despite the fact that chaplains could have been repatriated, many chose not to and faced hardships, even death in the POW camps. This chapter will examine the ministry that was exercised by ministers of the Church of Scotland who found themselves as POWs in the 1939-45 War.

As the war developed, more and more families found themselves facing the terror of relatives being listed as killed, wounded, missing or as taken prisoner. In 1942 the War Office released an up-to-date list of casualties from the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. This list, published in the Chaplain's Magazine of the Middle East in November 1942, revealed that 168 chaplains of all denominations had been killed, wounded or reported missing, and 86 who were known to be POWs.⁵¹⁴ At the time it was known that over 77,000 officers and men were being held as POWs. Included among the chaplain POWs were 14 Presbyterian chaplains.

⁵¹³F. Bussy, “Field Marshall Montgomery - A Chaplain's Recollections,” by a former Staff Chaplain GHQ 21 Army Group, 1944-45, Hampshire Chronicle 1974.

From the beginning of hostilities the Church of Scotland attempted to keep a close eye upon the whereabouts of its ministers who had been called up for military service, including those held as POWs. The minutes of the Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces reveal the names of seven Scottish ministers reported to be POWs by October 1940. Amongst them were the Rev W.E.K. Rankin, formerly of Holy Trinity Church St Andrews, and the Rev D.H.C. Read of Greenbank Church in Edinburgh.⁵¹⁵ Periodically during the war years the Committee recorded that Church of Scotland men were being held, had been repatriated or in the case of the Rev J. Birnie Allan, had managed to escape.

Similarly, the General Assembly each year was informed about which of its ministers were known to be in the POW camps abroad. In May 1941 the Assembly heard in the Chaplains' Report that "fifty-two ministers of the Church of Scotland served with the British Expeditionary Force in France last year; that three were killed in action or died of wounds, and that seven were taken prisoners of war."⁵¹⁶

The following year the General Assembly was informed that still more Scottish chaplains had been taken prisoner, once again demonstrating the close proximity of the chaplain in his work to the front line. The Chaplains' Committee reported with regret the capture of the Rev Gordon Bennett, chaplain to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots serving in Singapore, and also that the Rev Murdo Macleod and Mr Henry Smith were also reported missing. The report added that "there is no news as yet of the fate of these chaplains but there is still hope that they may be prisoners of war."⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴A C Dow, Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland (1856-1945) unpublished dissertation, p.168-169.

⁵¹⁵Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to HM Forces minute book, 22 Oct 1929- 21 Feb 1951. p.212.

⁵¹⁶Reports, May 1941, p.498.

⁵¹⁷ Reports, May 1942, p.4.

In 1943 the General Assembly was informed of attempts being made by the Church to keep in touch with its ministers in the POW camps: "Each Moderator in his year of office has sent a letter to them. The Convenor, in the name of the Committee has written personal letters, and books have been sent from the Committee."⁵¹⁸ In May 1945 the Chaplains' Committee observed that there were still eleven Scottish chaplains being held as POWs and the Committee was anxious about "their position and welfare in these last days of their captivity."⁵¹⁹ It was further stated in the report that "the work, courage and faithfulness of all chaplains who are Prisoners of War has been commented upon by all and the Committee desires to record once more its high appreciation and trusts that soon they may be released and restored to health and strength."⁵²⁰ The Scottish Church committees evidently did all they could to monitor the situation of their chaplains and to keep their plight as POWs before the Churches.

The experience of having a relative captured was met with a mixed response by family and friends. Naturally there was initially a sense of relief that a loved one serving overseas had not been killed, but there was an even greater fear about how they were being treated, under what conditions were they living and when if ever would they be allowed to return home. Many POW families had to endure a long and stressful vigil over many years.

For the soldier the thought of becoming a POW was anathema. He had been trained to fight and been taught how to survive on the field of battle, but not how to cope with captivity. As the Rev David Read recalled: "The army teaches you that you

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁵¹⁹ Reports, May 1945, p.344.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.344.

may be killed, and prepares you for the experience of being wounded. But nobody ever mentions that you might be taken prisoner - at least not during training.”⁵²¹

Read was himself taken prisoner by the Germans at St. Valery on 12 June 1940.

Later when asked whether he had been prepared for this eventuality he remarked:

No, I was not prepared, not prepared at all. It was a relief that I wasn't killed. Before I was captured I was sure we were going to be shelled...it is at such times that you review all your beliefs...I remembered St Paul said, “My God shall supply all your needs...”, for me “All” my needs meant that God was there whether I was killed, wounded or whatever.⁵²²

Like many men taken prisoner Read had no idea how long it would be before his family heard that he had been taken captive. Somewhat ironically, his wife, who worked for the Red Cross in London during his confinement, saw more direct military action in the Blitz than he did in the POW camp. As will be shown later, it was to be several months before letters could be exchanged and communication re-established.

Under International Law every prisoner of war is bound to give, if questioned on the subject, his rank, true name and number.⁵²³ The duty of a soldier taken prisoner is to refuse any information that may be useful to the enemy except his true identity. The chaplain had an obligation to declare exactly who he was and therefore from the outset be given due treatment and status. The situation at the point of capture however was often quite chaotic and it was not clear in every case that the chaplain was who he said he was. In late 1940 the Rev John White of the Barony Church wrote to the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces in reference to the Rev G.W. Hamilton of Comrie, who had been taken prisoner. White declared to the Committee that “as Hamilton was a combatant officer it was not possible to take steps for his release on

⁵²¹ D.H.C. Read, *This Grace Given*, (Michigan 1984), p.100.

⁵²² D.H.C. Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁵²³ Notes for Active Service Chaplains, Second Army, (Apr 1944), p.28.

the grounds that he was a minister.”⁵²⁴ In another case the Rev Murdo Ewen Macdonald, formerly minister of Portree, was wounded and captured in the Western Desert while serving as chaplain to the Parachute Regiment. At the time of capture he was indistinguishable from any other member of his unit, as he was wearing his Paratrooper’s Red Beret and no other insignia.⁵²⁵ Chaplains were given a special status under the Geneva convention but this meant little on the field of battle or as one army closed on another.

The remainder of this chapter will examine how some chaplains coped with the experience of POW life from the moment of capture, through captivity and the relief of liberation and repatriation.

PART 1. CAPTURE.

A chaplain, as a non-combatant, was covered by the Geneva Convention and given special status as ‘Protected Personnel’. According to the Convention both chaplains and medical officers were entitled to repatriation but as many believed they had a valuable service to offer to their fellow prisoners they often declined the chance of repatriation. For many chaplains and medical officers, service in a POW camp was to prove to be the most effective, challenging and satisfactory period in their whole ministry and career. Nevertheless, the experience of being captured and held as a POW was one which almost everyone, including chaplains, found to be both terrifying and humiliating.

⁵²⁴ Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, Minute 590, p.215.

⁵²⁵ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

Article 2 of the Geneva Convention of 1929 states that at all time Prisoners of War are to be “humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, from insults and from public curiosity.”⁵²⁶ Unfortunately there are many recorded incidents of POWs having been badly treated. And as some Scottish chaplains could testify special non-combatant status offered little protection against maltreatment.

After his capture and transportation to Germany, the Church of Scotland chaplain, the Rev Murdo Ewen Macdonald, was taken to the camp known as Dulag Luft. This was an interrogation centre where he was kept in solitary confinement and maltreated for nineteen days. (Macdonald was under investigation following an explosion and destruction of an enemy aircraft). He was threatened with being shot, subjected to extremes of hot then cold temperature and questioned endlessly both day and night.⁵²⁷

Another Scottish chaplain, the Rev Robert Stuart Loudon, was captured at Tobruk on 21 June 1942. Initially he was held by the Italians before being moved to Germany. At times, Loudon recorded in his war diary, he and his fellow captives were treated more like criminals than as POWs:

After capture we found ourselves in Italian hands, a big change from the German fighting troops, with whom we had had to deal with up to then...the Italians had been using that stretch of ground for prisoners for some two months, without making any sanitary arrangements whatsoever, with the result that it stunk with foulness...the whole place was alive with flies...Eventually we were evacuated from the battle zone [in accordance with the Geneva Convention]. But it was as annoying as it was depressing to be jeered at by every group of Italian soldiers we passed.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ Geneva Convention 1929, Article 2.

⁵²⁷ See Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Padre Mac: The Man from Harris, (Stornoway Gazette 1992), Chapters 9 and 10.

⁵²⁸ R.S. Loudon, Tobruk 1942: Before and After, An excerpt from his War Diary, published privately, 1990.

Article 4 of the Convention states that “The detaining Power is required to provide for the maintenance of prisoners of war in its charge.”⁵²⁹ The ability of the German authorities, for example, to comply with this order was hindered by the large number of POWs for whom they found themselves responsible. Later, as the war went on, the treatment that POWs received, including the chaplains, depended very much upon the personality of the local German commander, and also on the progress of the war itself. As one American POW observed:

From April 1942 until February 1945 the allied prison population at Stalag Luft III mushroomed from several hundred men to more than ten thousand...Relations with the German staff went from good to bad and mediocre, influenced by the pace of the war, the prisoners’ conduct, outside interference, and personnel changes....⁵³⁰

In any war situation the most dangerous time for the POW is the moment of capture. It is almost impossible to overstate the enormity of the meaning of captivity. The tension and fear of captivity were no less intense for the chaplain than for any other serviceman.

David Wild, the Assistant Master and Chaplain at Eton College, was a Church of England priest who enlisted on 4 September 1939 as chaplain to the 4th Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, a Territorial Army Unit. He was captured on 29 May 1940: “Our total active service had lasted just over 15 days...our humiliation was total.”⁵³¹ He was later to be despatched to Oflag VIIC at Laufen in Ober-Bayern near Salzberg, where by June 1940 they numbered 1200 men, with the arrival of the Officers of the 51st Highland Division captured at St. Valery.

⁵²⁹ Geneva Convention, 1929, Article 4.

⁵³⁰ A.A. Durand, *Stalag Luft III, The Secret Story*, (Louisiana State University Press Baton Rouge and London 1988,) p.74.

⁵³¹ D. Wild, *Prisoner of Hope*, (Sussex 1992), p.16.

The Scottish chaplain, the Rev D.H.C. Read, was captured at St. Valery on 12 June 1940. Of this experience, he later recalled, he felt anger more than anything else.⁵³² His unit had had less than twenty-four hours experience of real war. Amid the heat of battle, Read recalled in his book This Grace Given: “My mind was never so concentrated on the question of life and death as it was during those five minutes. As a chaplain, I did my best to look serene, but I was, of course, as terrified as anyone else.”⁵³³ Read was angry prior to his capture because he knew the German snipers were taking pot-shots at them, trying to scare them as much as to kill them. But Read went on to recall “the young man to whom I formally surrendered was polite...but in my rage, I began using all the German invectives I commanded to denounce Hitler....”⁵³⁴ That feeling of rage was common amongst POWs.

A number of other Scottish chaplains serving with the 51st Highland Division were captured along with Read. The Senior Chaplain of the Division, the Rev A.D. Duff, formerly minister at Crieff, was killed at St. Valery. The Rev Eric Rankin, the Rev G.C. McCutcheon and the Rev John McKie Hunter, along with many others were all taken prisoner at St. Valery in June 1940.

Eric Rankin of Holy Trinity Church, St. Andrews, who was chaplain to the Lothian and Border Yeomanry, recorded in his war diary his fears at the point of capture:

I confess I was a little shaken in view of the fact that evidently what the poet called the tide of battle was about to roll over me. I hoped it would roll fast. There was not long to wait. An enemy tank appeared and opened fire. I found myself shaking like a leaf for some time longer, but the tank went off....⁵³⁵

⁵³² D.H.C. Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁵³³ D.H.C. Read, This Grace Given, p. 99-103.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁵³⁵ E. Rankin, A Chaplain's Diary, (1939-40), published privately, (1978), p.69.

The next day in desperation for a drink he gave himself up to the German forces: “So began captivity at 8am on Friday 14 June 1940. I was wearing a dog-collar and my captors seemed rather amused that they had bagged a ‘Geistliche’. They were not the least unkindly - in fact the reverse.”⁵³⁶

The Rev John McKie Hunter remembered vividly the day of his capture:

By the early morning of the 12th June 1940 disorganisation was almost complete, most of the units having broken up into small isolated groups. As a general rule, the padre devoted himself to the job he saw to hand in the place where he happened to find himself - attending the wounded, and trying to reassure individuals, as in this predominantly Territorial division there were many young and inexperienced soldiers. The chaplains were so busily engaged in these tasks that, to most of them, the sudden appearance of a shouting, revolver-waving German came as a considerable shock...within a couple of hours of capture most of us found ourselves marching, and we kept doing so for almost a month.⁵³⁷

The men captured at St. Valery were forced to walk nearly 250 miles back to German Territory and POW camp.

In 1942 four Scottish chaplains were captured during the North African Campaign, including the Rev J.G. Matheson; Rev R.S. Loudon; Rev Murdo Ewen Macdonald and the Rev W. Burns.

The Rev J.G. Matheson was formerly a minister of the Free Church of Scotland but had been admitted during the war to the Church of Scotland. At the time of his transfer to the Church of Scotland Matheson was chaplain to the 7th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders. Feeling called to the Church of Scotland he resigned his Free Church charge and moved his family out of the manse in Castletown to Edinburgh. He knew that they would be able to survive this move because at the time, he recalled, a

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p.71.

⁵³⁷ J. Smyth, In this Sign Conquer, (London 1968), pp.222-223.

“chaplain’s pay was better than that of a Free Church Minister...I suppose I made money out of the war.”⁵³⁸

Matheson was posted to the Headquarters of the 10th Indian Division based in Cairo and later sent to the Western Desert, where he was attached to the Duke of Connaught Light Infantry. At the time he was looking for a more active role in the war and had suggested to the Senior Chaplain that he might try to become a combatant officer.

Action was soon to come Matheson’s way, for when the Regiment moved to Tobruk they were involved in a fierce tank battle where they were out-gunned and decimated:

The Colonel and Adjutant were both killed. We ended up in retreat and knew that capture was imminent. Under fire you are in a state of suspense, something big is going to happen, will this be the end or not...As the chaplain you had to try and feel what the men were feeling and to express their thoughts for them...they thought about death and what it meant, about home, and whether their religion would stand the test of time. You hardly ever found anything but a thankful response for prayer and pastoral care.⁵³⁹

About 3 o’clock one morning the vehicle in which Matheson was travelling was hit and he was captured. A German doctor was present and after treating his own men he treated the prisoners. Matheson went and thanked him. The German medical officer was surprised to see a chaplain in the front line.

Another Scottish minister, the Rev Robert Stuart Loudon, was the Senior chaplain in Tobruk at the time of its capture by Rommel's forces in June 1942. When the second siege of Tobruk began on Wednesday 17 June 1942 there were eleven chaplains inside the fortified town, including seven from the Church of England, one Methodist, and three from the Church of Scotland. The three Church of Scotland men

⁵³⁸ J.G. Matheson, Taped interview, Skye, 13 June 1994.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

were Louden, the Rev Hector Macdonald (attached to the 2nd Battalion the Cameron Highlanders) and the Rev John Birnie Allan (attached to the 68th Medium Regiment Royal Artillery). Louden managed to visit all the chaplains in his care in the three days before the battle for Tobruk began.

As the enemy closed on Tobruk, Louden, along with some other officers, attempted to escape by sea but they were cut off by the Germans. After an unsuccessful attempt to get away they were arrested by a German patrol. As some of the group were slightly wounded Louden asked his captors in German to get an ambulance. After speaking to the German soldiers, Louden wrote in his war diary:

I had a chance to chat with the German Corporal and Private...They had all been rather scared when they heard they were about to attack Tobruk, the British stronghold in Libya...it was utterly miserable to see German troops everywhere, looting the deserted camps, gathering in war material and exulting their triumph.⁵⁴⁰

The next day Louden recorded in his war diary:

The Chief Chaplain of the German Afrika Korps (Evangelisch) arrived in Tobruk and agreed to take me back to my chaplain's house in the town to see if any of my things were left...The house had been looted and stripped...I did find my robes and Communion plate and one or two books. Things very welcome to me as I looked forward to doing chaplaincy work as a POW....⁵⁴¹

The Rev Bill Burns had taken his MA in 1935 and his BD at Glasgow in 1938. He was licensed in May 1938 and became assistant at Lesmahago to Dr Lindsay, the parish minister. At the outbreak of war Burns suggested becoming a chaplain but as he was not yet ordained he enlisted in December 1939 as a combatant officer in the Royal Artillery. He served for two years in the Gunners before approaching the Presbytery of Jerusalem and being ordained by them on 4 May 1942.

⁵⁴⁰ R.S. Louden, War Diary.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

Commissioned as a chaplain, he was sent to join the 8th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry in the desert where he found a large number of Scots. They later engaged Rommel's Advance Guard in battle. While helping to evacuate some wounded, Burns was captured. He was told by a German officer that as a chaplain he could not be captured but that the officer would be obliged if Burns would stay.⁵⁴² After capture Burns and his colleagues were herded into cattle trucks and taken to Ben Gazi. They were, he later recalled, reasonably well treated.

The Rev G.M.R. Bennett was chaplain to the 2nd Battalion The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) at the time of the fall of Singapore in February 1942. He had trained for the Church of Scotland ministry at St Andrews and had served for three years as assistant in Alloa Old Kirk before ordination. Upon joining the Army he found a strong disposition amongst Scottish soldiers against anything English and the Church of England in particular: "I left Alloa for the Army in Catterick in May 1939 and was met by a history of Scots and scorn for the Church of England."⁵⁴³ He was posted to the Far East on a troopship where there were four chaplains who appeared at least to have overcome national and sectarian prejudice. There were two Church of England and two Church of Scotland chaplains on the troopship: "We shared Sundays about...it seemed absolutely natural,"⁵⁴⁴ noted Bennett.

At the time of his capture with the fall of Singapore, Bennett was one of seven chaplains taken as POW. On 30 December 1941 the bulk of the garrison's survivors were marched to Shamshuipo for internment. Bennett went with his unit into detention. But as Sir John Smyth recalled in his book In this Sign Conquer, conditions

⁵⁴² W. Burns, taped interview, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

⁵⁴³ G.M.R. Bennett, "Oecumenism: A Prison Experience," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol. XXII, No. III, May 1969, p.10.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

inside the camps were deplorable: “some 4000 officers and men being herded into a shell of a barracks...the Japanese refused to bring in any drugs or medicine...men were dying almost daily...services were held regularly and as Bennett recalls these were voluntary but well attended.”⁵⁴⁵ On 13 August 1942 Bennett was moved to the adjoining Argyle Street Camp, where he was the only chaplain for a year until a Canadian Roman Catholic Priest, Father Delonghery, joined him. Throughout their captivity in the Japanese POW camps, the prisoners were starved - starved of food, clothing, medical supplies, news, letters from home and sometimes even starved of spiritual consolation.⁵⁴⁶ It was not always possible for chaplains to gain access to the soldiers camps and sometimes the men were punished by having their right to religious services withdrawn.

Being captured and held as a POW came as a great shock, and the chaplains were frightened like everyone else. From the moment of capture they shared exactly the same fate and experience as their brothers in arms. While for many there was a feeling of humiliation at being caught, for others it came almost as a blessed relief. As the Rev G.F. Miller, a Baptist Minister captured at Dunkirk in May 1940 recalled: “once I got over my surprise at being captured, my first thought was of my good fortune...I was alive and unhurt...I would continue my ministry under different conditions.”⁵⁴⁷ This was a view shared by many chaplains destined for the POW camps in Europe and in the Far East.

At a human level, as noted above, the chaplain experienced the same feelings of fear and anxiety as any other soldier at the point of capture. But in some ways he felt

⁵⁴⁵ Smyth, p.286.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p.291.

⁵⁴⁷ G.F. Miller, “Prisoner of War,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol. VII, No.50, Jan 1951, p.91.

even more vulnerable. He had not been as well trained on how to survive on the battlefield and as a non-combatant he did not have the means to defend himself. He was a chaplain and not a soldier, but would the enemy recognize this fact? In the blur of war would his captor see that he was different?

Some chaplains gave up their chance to escape knowing that there were wounded, dying and dead men to be attended to. They knew they still had a duty and a function to perform. They knew that no one else could properly attend to these matters and that it was expected of them. The Scottish chaplains Rankin, McKie Hunter and Macdonald were all captured while doing their job, caring for wounded and dying men.

The thought of death or captivity forced the chaplains to face up to their own mortality. When he was under enemy fire, Read remembered those words from St. Paul that God would supply all his needs regardless of the outcome. This gave him an inner strength to face whatever would be his destiny. Other chaplains, such as the Scottish chaplain James Matheson, felt a great feeling of suspense under fire, as well as a call to feel what the men felt and to try in some way to express their thoughts and feelings. The men were frightened. The chaplains were also frightened. As the battle raged everyone had a job to do.

In a strange way the chaplain had grown up with his men, who had generally done their best to defend him when he was unable to defend himself. Now many chaplains accepted the responsibility of carrying on their ministry in the POW camp.

PART 2. CAPTIVITY

The question may well be asked: “how does one settle down to the dull monotony of gefangenschaft after all the exaggerated living of the battlefield?”⁵⁴⁸ Chaplains like all POWs had to learn very quickly how to cope both psychologically as well as physically with their confinement. POWs soon discovered that a deterioration in their physical state had an automatic impact upon their psychological condition. Hunger, cold, ill treatment, lack of sleep, poor hygiene and lack of support both from home and fellow prisoners quickly reduced the resolve to survive. It was the experience of many prisoners that the sooner they accepted their physical environment and the POW camp rules and restrictions the better.

According to M. Duggand, long years in the POW camp taught people the importance of “focusing on the immediate...and shutting out more emotionally laden feelings, thoughts and hopes.”⁵⁴⁹ They deliberately avoided the stress of coping with what might happen tomorrow. Rumour was always rife in the POW camp. But the experience of a number of Scottish chaplains indicates that generally speaking the men did cope with their deprived, dehumanised and threatening environment. Many soldiers and officers bear witness to the fact that the chaplains and doctors in the camps did much to alleviate the situation.

After capture, the men went through a process of initial screening, de-kitting and sometimes interrogation, before being separated into different groups. Nearly all chaplains and men found this to be a disturbing experience. In his book The Stalag Men, Donald Edgar, a former POW and Sergeant in the 2nd/6th Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment, recalled that after they were captured as part of the Highland Division at St Valery, the officers and men were separated: “The Highland Officers

⁵⁴⁸ M. Duggand (ed), Padre in Colditz. The Diary of J. Ellison Platt, (London 1978), p.106.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p.106.

were separated and sent to an Oflag, an Officers camp.” (The men were sent to a Stalag or soldiers camp.) “I was sorry to see the Scots officers go,” continued Edgar, “for they looked like leaders of men, unlike those of my own battalion who, with a few exceptions, had been for days more concerned with their own survival than the welfare of their men.”⁵⁵⁰

As chaplains wore officer rank they were automatically segregated from the men to whom they believed they had a right to minister. As a result many chaplains fought long and hard battles with the POW camp authorities to be allowed to visit the Stalags. But as David Wild discovered, obtaining permits for chaplains to visit other camps was a constant problem: “On our side it was important to give them no excuse to suspect that the visits for which we sought permission were for any other purpose than what they termed ‘Seelsorgerische Tatigkeit’ or Soul Caring activity.”⁵⁵¹

David Read recalled how when he got to Oflag VIIA there were no fewer than 18 chaplains and 30 doctors, while he knew that elsewhere there were camps with neither medical nor spiritual support.⁵⁵² In his book This Grace Given, Read described these early days in captivity as follows: “Being taken prisoner means being stripped down. Suddenly everything you have come to rely on is gone. Your possessions, your job, your plans, those dearest to you, your country, all these are, in a peculiar way, no longer there. There's just you and God.”⁵⁵³

One further example of the initial tension created by separation and segregation in captivity is found in the POW memoirs of the Scottish chaplain John McKie Hunter:

⁵⁵⁰ D. Edgar, The Stalag Men, (London 1982), p.3.

⁵⁵¹ Wild, p.90.

⁵⁵² D.H.C. Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁵⁵³ Read, This Grace Given, p.105.

When we reached Doullens (on the long march from St Valery) we heard the news of the fall of France, and it was here that the officers and men were separated...On the march the various units had tended to keep together, and all ranks got a certain degree of comfort in being with familiar people. It was at Doullens that most of us began to realise the full bitterness of captivity.⁵⁵⁴

What were the conditions in the POW camps like from the chaplain's perspective and how effective were the chaplains in exercising a pastoral ministry in the POW situation?

Almost every book about prisoners of war tells a similar story of the poor quality of the food and the endless struggle against hunger and starvation. Undoubtedly the Germans did not have sufficient food to feed adequately the vast numbers of POWs captured in the early years of the war. However, David Read believed that he and his fellow prisoners were starved unnecessarily during the first year of the war, while his captors ate fairly well.⁵⁵⁵ In writing about his life as a POW, Read constantly referred to the food situation. On the long march from Normandy to Germany he wrote that "there was no food in sight, and coffee and tea were just distant dreams. As we went through the villages there was always a chance of a crust of bread from the generous French women - to be shared among five of us...my clerical collar attracted more alms."⁵⁵⁶ Some days, Read noted, there was no food at all: "I once tried grabbing a huge turnip from a field we were passing, but a few bites were enough." Later, when he arrived at Laufen, his first POW camp, the food situation was little better: "Before the Red Cross parcels began to arrive, life was dominated by thoughts of food - and

⁵⁵⁴ Smyth, pp.223-224.

⁵⁵⁵ D.H.C. Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁵⁵⁶ Read, This Grace Given, pp.106ff.

also by the passionate desire to hear from home.”⁵⁵⁷ A shortage of food was a major preoccupation for most POWs.

Eric Rankin of St Andrews wrote in his war diary that whenever possible on the long march to the camp he would try to shop for provisions to supplement the meagre diet: “The guards allowed me to take one of the troops to go shopping for breakfast, and we bought up a supply of bread, sardines and jam. Had I known what was to come I should have doubled the purchases and found myself better off in the lean day or two ahead. I had about four hundred or five hundred francs when I was captured.”⁵⁵⁸ It appears that Rankin's captors had complied with Article 6 of the Geneva convention and not taken his money off him.

During the long day's marches, often exceeding the Convention's recommendation of a maximum of 20 kms per day, Rankin and others were constantly hungry. Due to the kindness of the local people they did not starve:

Two things enabled us to keep going. One was the fact that we were physically extremely fit...the second and greatest assisting factor was the generosity of the people all the way on the line of march...soup was the most highly prized ...milk was next on the list...but of eatables bread was the most popular.⁵⁵⁹

Upon reaching Laufen POW camp Rankin shared a room with David Read. Again for the first three months they were constantly hungry:

Our state bordered on starvation. We used to get up on our beds and lie there for most of the afternoons, and in the better weather lie quietly outside, so as to endure the pains of hunger better. Exercise was out of the question, apart from a few minutes' stroll round the garden. On the 10th July the nine of us in the room shared a Red Cross parcel...by the middle of August we began to get shares of Red Cross supplies of food from Switzerland.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., p.110.

⁵⁵⁸ Rankin, *War Diary*, p.72.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p.79.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.106-107.

The Rev Jock Platt, a Methodist chaplain who ended up in Colditz, remembered vividly that the worst of all cravings felt by the POW was for food: "Hunger was a tyranny they could not escape."⁵⁶¹ Red Cross parcels were eventually allowed to reach the POWs in accordance with article 11 of the Geneva Convention. They became essential additions to both health and morale. Again Platt recalled that "those parcels brought a sense of psychological well-being as well as nutrition and strong and pitiable was the contrast in the POW camps where the Geneva Convention did not apply."⁵⁶² Here Platt was thinking of the lack of care the Germans took of Russian POWs and vice versa. At least, he reflected, "British POWs could be living in spartan decency with a diet adequate to health, while, only a few strands of wire away Russian POWs were literally starving."⁵⁶³ Towards the end of his time in captivity the food supply was again becoming critical. On New Year's Day 1945, Platt wrote in his diary from Colditz: "I have been hungry every minute of the day since Christmas Day, and that includes the minutes following each meal time...Homer said, 'the belly is a hard master'."⁵⁶⁴

When food was in good supply and there was a delivery of Red Cross parcels morale would rise. Donald Edgar remarked on how in his Stalag Red Cross parcels arrived in time for Christmas 1940:

On Christmas Day there were two bottles of beer a man, the bread ration was doubled and there was a first class pea soup with quite a lot of meat in it...What a boost to morale these Red Cross parcels brought. Here was tangible proof that we were thought of, considered, cared for back in Britain, that had for so many months seemed to belong to a different even alien world.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶¹ Duggan, p.27.

⁵⁶² Ibid., p.27.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p.28.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p.282.

⁵⁶⁵ Edgar, p.58.

The Scottish chaplain, John McKie Hunter suggested in his war-time memoirs that the response of the chaplain to the shortage of food could set an example to the rest of the men. The close proximity in which they lived and moved meant that all men were known by their actions: “The majority, I am sure, felt it to be the most trying visible test of the sincerity of their calling that they would ever be likely to endure. One had to exercise extreme self-discipline to hold back from the rat race for food....”⁵⁶⁶ By good self-discipline the chaplains set the standard not only for others but also for their future ministry in captivity.

It was not only in the POW camp that the chaplains of the Second World War discovered that every aspect of their life and ministry was in the public domain. The chaplain who swore, drank too much in the mess, was ill disciplined in his personal life or tried to be too much ‘one of the boys,’ was quickly found out and suffered in consequence loss of respect. The close confines of Army life and prison life in particular made everyone acutely aware of each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The men looked to the officers for leadership and example. In no small way did the men equally look to the chaplain for spiritual direction and his defence of the moral high ground, regardless of the fact that many of the men would themselves never have voluntarily entered a church.

It was the experience of many chaplains that they could be of assistance not just to the men but also to their fellow officers. Many of these officers, especially younger ones, would take their personal problems to the padre if they felt he could be trusted. There was also great pressure upon the chaplains to be seen to work closely together regardless of any theological or denominational difference. Ecclesiastical divisions tended to fade into insignificance in the POW situation, and it was important

⁵⁶⁶ Smyth, p.224.

that the chaplains were seen worshipping and praying together. It was one thing to be seen to be sharing food but it was another to be seen sharing Communion together. Nevertheless, in many camps separate Communion services were held on a denominational basis.

In some of the camps, particularly in the Far East, conditions were so bad that there was little energy for theological dispute. Duncan Wilson was an ordinary soldier serving with the Royal Signals when he was captured by the Japanese and sent to Changi prison. In his book Survival was for me, he made frequent reference to the inadequate food supply. He noted how the food was provided irregularly and how it was of both poor quality and in short supply: “The Japanese guards enjoyed the spectacle of their prisoners grabbing for morsels of meat like vultures round a killed beast. This was part of the cost of survival.”⁵⁶⁷

The Scottish chaplain Gordon Bennett remembered the constant hunger from his POW experience under the Japanese:

Throughout the three years and eight months of incarceration the main diet was boiled rice with boiled seaweed, taro root or chrysanthemum leaves. It was slow starvation, the unbalanced diet, together with the lack of vitamins, quickly bringing on beri-beri, pellagra, sores and ulcers, and general debilitation.⁵⁶⁸

Another sufferer at the hands of the Japanese was Donald Smith, a future Church of Scotland minister. In his book And all the Trumpets, he wrote:

I arrived in Nong Pladuk from Chungkai on 6 April 1943. I immediately reported sick. Through the middle of the festering hole in my leg ran a narrow, blackened spar which I realised with horror was the central bone of my leg... The surgeon cut away all the dead flesh. Drastic disease demanded drastic treatment.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁷ D. Wilson, Survival was for me, (Wigtown Scotland 1991), p.68.

⁵⁶⁸ Smyth, p.286.

⁵⁶⁹ D. Smith, And all the Trumpets, (London 1954), p.112.

Articles 13,14 and 15 of the 1929 International Treaty relative to the treatment of POWs lay down laws for health and hygiene in the camps. On the long march from Normandy John McKie Hunter recalled that the first real opportunity they had to stop and clean up was at Tournai:

There we enjoyed the luxury of a cold shower. When we stripped we found our bodies to be a uniform dark grey of dirt from head to toe. We also took the opportunity of washing our shirts and pants - in cold water. We were to wear the same undergarments day and night until February or March 1941, when clothing parcels began to arrive from home.⁵⁷⁰

At Tournai the allied prisoners were housed in the town jail. It was here that the men were able to freshen up with a cold shower bath. As the St Andrew's minister Eric Rankin remarked: "the dirt came off in loads and the result was to revivify body and spirit! I shall ever think kindly of Tournai jail for this bath alone, and indeed my idea of jails will be always pleasanter."⁵⁷¹

By the time the POWs reached a permanent camp they were in very poor shape from both hunger and exhaustion. G.F. Miller, the Senior Chaplain of those chaplains captured with the 51st Highland Division at St. Valery, recorded in the RACHD Journal how they were allowed to wash and clean up. But also how they were "dehumanised to the point of almost sanitation":

Our first hot bath, for 'delousing' purposes, was the acme of luxury. We then had our heads completely shorn, as close and uniform as only electric shears can cut, and our photographs taken - a calculated indignity which, as we learned afterwards, our camp alone suffered. For the purpose of the photographs we held before us a school slate on which our POW number was chalked....⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰J. Smith, p.223.

⁵⁷¹ Rankin, War Diary, p.86.

⁵⁷² G.F. Miller, "Prisoner of War," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol. VII, No.50, Jan 1951, p.92.

After being deloused, having his hair shorn to the point of being practically bald, and given the allotted number 1216, Eric Rankin noted: "By relays we then were led to the bathroom and deloused. All our clothes were taken and put in the hot chamber of the wash-house while we enjoyed a hot shower and a luxury it was...before resuming our clothes we went to be medically examined."⁵⁷³

From the psychological point of view it was not always easy to be positive about life day after day in the POW camps. Even the chaplains, who as non-combatants often had greater freedom than most, found that from time to time they became depressed.

David Read commented that:

The one spectre that began to haunt us over the years was the thought of an indefinitely extended imprisonment. We didn't talk about it, but it was there, and it is the only recurring nightmare I connect with my life as a POW...We endured periods of boredom and the occasional wave of depression, but we learned to cope with these.⁵⁷⁴

After his war-time service in the POW camps in both Italy and Germany, the Rev Bill Burns (later Church of Scotland minister in Angus), commented upon how many men suffered from depression in the camps:

The men had their problems; family problems, dear John letters etc. At Modena we had the normal range of problems faced by any parish minister or chaplain...Some men became depressed but none committed suicide. But being part of the POW life ourselves meant we were less aware of any unusual behaviour.⁵⁷⁵

Similarly, the Rev James Matheson commented upon the nature of illness and disease in the camps:

The food in the camp was pretty grim. We had a square of meat once a week and we got acorn coffee and soup...we had a lot of illness and disease, and we buried a lot of people there. Particularly when they stopped getting letters from

⁵⁷³ Rankin, *War Diary*, p.101.

⁵⁷⁴ Read, *This Grace Given*, p.115.

⁵⁷⁵ W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

their wives, that was when they took ill. Again and again we used the village cemetery. Men died when they lost hope, they were desperate to know when they would be released and they couldn't think more than two months ahead...There was quite a lot of psychotic illness so we had to develop ways to occupy ourselves through sport and school.⁵⁷⁶

As chaplain to the American POWs in Stalag Luft III, the Rev Murdo Ewen Macdonald became actively involved with men suffering from depression and psychotic illness. (Macdonald accepted an invitation by the Americans to go to their camp as chaplain as they had no one else to minister to their needs.) In an article in the West Highland Free Press on 18 November 1988 he described the mental suffering of the men:

We had problems of mental depressions and deterioration...we used to hide those who had breakdowns...if found by the guards they were taken away and never seen again. They were killed and the Germans would write, "died of pneumonia," on the certificate....⁵⁷⁷

A detailed study of Stalag Luft III by Professor A.A. Durand revealed more about the depth of depression and mental illness experience by some of the POWs:

The medical care provided in Stalag Luft III was inadequate...there were many medical problems but perhaps the greatest concern, however, pertained to the treatment of mental cases, usually referred to as victims of 'barbed-wire psychosis.'...As overcrowding became widespread among the compounds the danger of epidemics grew. As some of the older prisoners began to mark off their fourth and fifth years of captivity, the number of mental cases increased. The only chance of reducing the instances of barbed-wire psychosis would have been to increase the number of parole walks and begin a program of repatriating prisoners.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ J.G. Matheson, Taped interview, Skye, 13 June 1994.

⁵⁷⁷ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, untitled article, West Highland Free Press, 18 Nov 1988.

⁵⁷⁸ See A.A. Durand, Stalag Luft III, especially chapter 9.

It was Durand's contention that American POWs suffered less from 'barbed-wire psychosis' than the British did, "primarily because they were not in captivity as long and because their families and homes were not being subjected to bombing raids."⁵⁷⁹

The Scot Murdo Ewen Macdonald became something of an expert in dealing with mental illness induced by prolonged periods in captivity: "People began to behave oddly. Nice people suddenly became short tempered. Normally polite men become unmannerly. This had a devastating effect if one of the men in an eight man room suddenly became mentally ill."⁵⁸⁰ Psychological illness drove some men to take their own lives, and Macdonald was awarded the Bronze Star by the Americans after the war for saving a number of men from self-destruction by his psychological debriefing and pastoral care. Later Macdonald was to write that, "human nature is a maddeningly complex bundle of contradictions."⁵⁸¹

According to M. Duggan, for the POWs of Colditz, "the war became a daily battle against boredom, depression, and demoralisation: a battle which most of them won with honours."⁵⁸² But from time to time the weariness of prison routine undermined even the most highly motivated. As Jock Platt, the Methodist chaplain in Colditz, observed in October 1943: "fundamental changes have taken place...young men have grown old from prison-weariness and hope deferred. Occupations of value...are cast aside in greater weariness and frustration. Conversation has almost stagnated...Talk of 'wimmin' in relation to sex has altogether ceased in some

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p.179.

⁵⁸⁰ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

⁵⁸¹ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Padre Mac: The Man from Harris, p.112.

⁵⁸² Duggan, p.6.

circles...The removal of foreigners has meant that Oflag IVC has lost its individuality.

As an all British camp it is a psychological mud-flat.”⁵⁸³

It was arduous living in a POW camp when even the chaplains were finding it hard to put a brave face on events. The Rev David Wild, one time chaplain at Laufen with Read and Rankin, remarked in his book Prisoner of Hope about feeling depressed and spiritually low. On 12 December 1943 Wild wrote in his diary:

I have been in the doldrums spiritually for the last few months; I know why perfectly. By no stretch of the imagination can I claim to be in love and charity with all men in these trying circumstances, and this tension seems to affect my whole outlook on life...It is a strange time in wartime. One thing only makes sense for me about it, that is that what we are doing and have been doing for four years is in the end going to be the foundation of better things for a greater number of people.⁵⁸⁴

Needless to say, J. Hayter recalls that “in the main, medical requirements were just ignored by the Japanese.”⁵⁸⁵ But it was the experience of many POWs that by depending upon each other they could see a way through the misery and the depression of the camps. From the earliest of days in captivity measures were taken to organise both intellectual and spiritual initiatives to alleviate both boredom and suffering. In early 1944 the Bishop of Singapore, himself now a POW, spoke of the way the prisoners bore one another’s burdens: “We formed a wider fellowship than any I had ever known before”, remarked John Hayter former assistant chaplain to Singapore Cathedral, “a fellowship of suffering humanity. Prisoners knew that when they were taken out of the cell for questioning or torture there were others of us behind praying for them.”⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p.225.

⁵⁸⁴D. Wild, Prisoner of Hope, (Sussex 1992), p.175.

⁵⁸⁵ J. Hayter, Priest in Prison, (London 1989), pp.176-177.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p.178.

The Geneva articles that deal with food, clothing, health and hygiene were generally speaking adhered to for British personnel in most European POW camps. The situation in Japan, however, particularly in the jungle camps, was much worse. The men who built the Burma-Siam railway suffered immeasurably and large numbers died through maltreatment and the loss of the will to live. Many men suffered hunger and deprivation but this was generally bearable and not in most cases life-threatening. The chances of surviving the POW camp became far worse when mental illness confused the mind and the spirit of hope was lost. The chaplains, therefore, had a particularly important role to play in the camps keeping hope alive and administering both sacrament and pastoral care to all in need.

It was both natural and understandable that the chaplains attempted to hold regular forms of religious observance. David Read recalls that even on the march to Germany, men captured at St. Valery regularly held and attended services. "We trudged through Flanders, Belgium and the Holland, then up to the banks of the Rhine. We usually observed Sundays with an informal service to which our captors made no objection."⁵⁸⁷ In a single moment a prisoner loses everything except the clothes on his back. Yet as a friend later observed to David Read, "it takes losing everything to find oneself facing God." Read went on to recall that "I was near the depths of despair. My wife who was running a church hut in Rennes, was still in France. Would she get out?...A wise old Colonel came alongside me one day on the march. 'Padre,' he told me, 'your work is just beginning.' He was right."⁵⁸⁸

When G.F. Miller was appointed as the Senior Chaplain at Laufen, there were thirty-one chaplains in one camp:

⁵⁸⁷ Read, This Grace Given, p.108.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.103.

We belonged to the Church of England, Ireland, Wales, Episcopal Church of Scotland and all the chief Free Churches. The three Roman Catholics were of Irish, Scots and English nationality, and even the other two United Board chaplains were a Welshman and an Ulsterman. Individually they were mostly good fellows, but collectively they were the most awkward team imaginable.⁵⁸⁹

At Laufen the chaplains were allowed only two services a Sunday, apart from Holy Communion. The Anglican and Free Church chaplains alternated and the chaplains took it in turn to preach. The Roman Catholics had their own weekly service. Read believed that ministering in the POW camp broke down the barriers between minister and congregation. Life in the camp was a “goldfish bowl. There was no possibility of a chaplain having a public image that might be totally different from the real self. Nor could a chaplain live in any kind of splendid isolation. We all endured the same conditions.”⁵⁹⁰

A week after his capture at Tobruk, Stuart Loudon, one of three Church of Scotland chaplains captured, was informed by his Italian captors that the chaplains could hold a service but that there was to be no sermon. Apparently the Italian Commander was afraid of ‘political agitation’. Loudon proceeded to hold a service in the open air to which some 500 officers attended. In his diary he wrote that “I read rather longer passages of scripture than usual. I read Psalm 91 and Philippians 3:13 to 4:13, the latter written by St. Paul when a prisoner, as I reminded my listeners.”⁵⁹¹ The routine in the prison camps did not vary much as far as the padres were concerned: “Censorship was maintained over their sermons throughout the war...and an officer

⁵⁸⁹ Miller, “Prisoner of War,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol. VII, No.50, Jan 1951, pp.94-95.

⁵⁹⁰ Read, This Grace Given, p.112.

⁵⁹¹ Loudon, War Diary, p.76.

from the prison establishment was present at the service to see that there was no departure from the previously censored script.”⁵⁹²

The full range of religious services and adherence to the Christian calendar was permitted in most European camps. Rankin noted in his diary that generally speaking the services were well attended:

We had our first Church of Scotland service at Laufen on 21 July 1941...the services were held during the summer in the garage and later on in the recreation room...We took turns to take prayers in the Main, Cobblers and East Blocks each night at 9.00 pm. There was a steady attendance at all of these places. We of the Church of Scotland had First Communicants Classes and instructed and received to Communion seven or eight men.⁵⁹³

Many chaplains felt that small Bible study and discussion groups were of greater value than the traditional Sunday observance. The padres had the opportunity to answer questions about Christian belief, doctrine and morals. But most important of all were the one-to-one conversations that were conducted while men walked the camp perimeter.⁵⁹⁴

The distribution of the men among many different camps and the separation of officers from men resulted in there being too many chaplains in some camps and none in others. In 1943 Murdo Ewen Macdonald volunteered to serve as chaplain to the American airmen in the south compound of Stalag Luft III. One report noted that on Sunday mornings after the morning roll-call, “it was quite a sight to see a thousand men running pell-mell for six hundred seats at Padre Mac's service. It is quite clear that the minister's popularity noticeably boosted the attendance figures in South Compound.”⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² Smyth, p.227.

⁵⁹³ Rankin, *War Diary*, p.109.

⁵⁹⁴ Smyth, p.227. Reference the memoirs of J. McKie Hunter.

⁵⁹⁵ Durand, p.217.

A report written by CSM J. Fulton of the Seaforth Highlanders, who was the British Man of Confidence⁵⁹⁶ in Stalag XXB, tells how in the early days of captivity there was only one officer POW in the main camp and that was the medical officer. He decided to request two padres:

I held the belief that it would be for the good of the prisoners of war and his morale if we had padres amongst us...I applied for a Church of England Padre and a Church of Scotland Padre. This was frowned on at first...I took up the matter with the Swiss delegate who approached the German authorities and eventually two padres arrived.⁵⁹⁷

One of the Church of Scotland chaplains posted to camp XXB was a Rev Norman Maclean.

One advantage both ministers and doctors had over their fellow captives was that they were able to continue to practise their profession despite the restrictions of a prison regime. There were fifteen chaplains present at the disastrous battle for Arnhem in 1944. Over a thousand men died in that battle and nearly three thousand were captured including ten chaplains, one of whom was the Rev J.G. Morrison, a Scottish minister, attached to the 7th Battalion The Kings Own Scottish Borderers. Morrison had landed at Arnhem as part of the glider force. As there were a great many men wounded, the chaplains occupied their time visiting the sick:

Going from bed to bed (in the prison hospital), comforting the dying and encouraging others. They were appreciated as a great source of information...lists of the dead and wounded were prepared and one of the chaplains acted as the camp barber. A chapel was opened and ward communions were administered and weekly services held in the dining hall. A Dutch Roman Catholic priest, reluctantly allowed in by the Germans, gave absolution to all his people.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶ The British Man of Confidence was a trusted POW who helped the German authorities administer the camps and who received some small privileges on the undertaking that they would neither aide nor attempt to escape.

⁵⁹⁷ J. Fulton, A Senior NCO in the Seaforth Highlanders who was captured and became a British Man of Confidence, this extract is from notes on the Organisation of Stalag XXB from the Point of View of the Prisoners of War. Accession held in the Seaforth Highlanders Museum, Fort George, Inverness.

⁵⁹⁸ P.R.C. Abram, "Airborne Chaplains at Arnhem," Notes found in the RACHD museum.

It was David Read's experience that POW life changed the men's sense of values. What mattered was 'Practical Christianity'; extremes of religious opinion be they evangelical or anglo-catholic were unwelcome. Those who made a great fuss about their religion were regarded by the others who shared this communal life to be selfish about their soul.⁵⁹⁹ But there were always extreme views to be found on both sides of the theological spectrum.

One practical measure which Presbyterian chaplains felt important, even in the POW situation, was the establishment of a Kirk Session in a number of POW camps in both Italy and Germany.⁶⁰⁰ During the First World War a formally constituted Kirk Session was started in a POW camp at Graudenz, but it was in Bari Camp in Italy during World War Two that three Church of Scotland chaplains on 6 September 1942 formed their Kirk Session. The three minister members were the Rev J. Birnie Allan, the Rev W.G. Burns and the Rev J.G. Matheson. Their first elder was a medical officer whose father was a minister in Arbroath. Later other Kirk Sessions were constituted in Padula, Bologna and Modena in Italy, before (after passing through various transit camps) the majority of officers from Bologna and Modena found themselves in Oflag V A in Germany.

After formal, though unofficial institution, due notice was sent to the General Assembly in Edinburgh,⁶⁰¹ admitting that "because of the unusual circumstances under which they have been working, necessary actions have been taken which may have been outside the normal forms of procedure." The Session report goes on to say: "This is a congregation drawn from all parts of the Empire, with a properly constituted

⁵⁹⁹ D.H.C. Read, taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁶⁰⁰ The first official Army Kirk Session was approved by the General Assembly for the 1st Battalion The Black Watch in 1952.

⁶⁰¹ W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

Session, holding regular services according to the order prescribed, yet not under the jurisdiction of any Presbytery.”⁶⁰² This report was agreed at a meeting of the Kirk Session in Oflag V A, Germany and dated Sunday 26 November 1944. It was subsequently sent to the General Assembly in Edinburgh and a copy forwarded to the Presbyterian churches in England, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, because “those admitted to full membership or ordained to the office of Elder were drawn from all the Dominions.”⁶⁰³

When later asked why he felt it necessary to have a formal Kirk Session, the Rev W.G. Burns replied: “It had to be done because people wanted to join the Church...we just felt it was right...it was important for the Church to be seen to be there and to be doing its business properly.”⁶⁰⁴ James Matheson recalled that he held a lot of confirmation classes and that a good number of men were admitted to the Church by the session.⁶⁰⁵ The Session minutes record the fact that at Padula on 7 February 1943, thirteen officers and other ranks were admitted to full membership. And at Modena it was decided to draw up a roll of communicants and adherents, which when completed totalled 161 members.⁶⁰⁶

In November 1942 the Bishop of Singapore conducted confirmations in Changi prison. In the men’s camp at Changi services were held every Sunday: “no one in Changi could ever be under the illusion that the Church was dormant.”⁶⁰⁷ The Scottish minister in Changi, Gordon Bennett, recalled that the “main daily services were

⁶⁰²Report on the work carried out by the Kirk Session in Prisoner of War Camps in Italy and Germany. Scottish Record Office, reference: Ch 2M10\3.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin, 19 Mar 1993.

⁶⁰⁵ J. Matheson, taped interview, Skye, 13 June 1994.

⁶⁰⁶ Report on the work carried out by the Kirk Session in POW camps in Italy and Germany. SRO CH 2M10\3.

⁶⁰⁷Hayter, p.140.

undenominational. But I fear,(Bennett wrote) the prayers, hymns and sermon were pure and unadulterated Old Kirk...In prison the Bible came alive.”⁶⁰⁸

After a year ministering alone in his Japanese POW camp, Bennett was delighted at the arrival of Father Delonghery, a Canadian Roman Catholic priest, on Easter Day 1943. Bennett was impressed by Delonghery’s daily devotions: “He never wavered one iota in his obedience. We knew we prayed for the same things and to the same God: but there it stopped...since this was long before the days of aggrorniamento we did not discuss religion.”⁶⁰⁹

Bennett recalled with great affection the celebration of Holy Communion in the POW camp:

Whatever medium we used, water or fruit juice, bread, biscuit or altar breads, never did the meal run out...and never were we conscious of losing the Real Presence of Our Lord who upheld us in the days when the enemy were most devilish and sent us forth strengthened and renewed in Spirit.⁶¹⁰

After two years the Scots left in camp numbered just 60 men. One day they demanded a Church of Scotland Communion but Bennett hesitated for three reasons: “Firstly, I doubted if I could remember the service. Second, there were no ordained elders amongst us. And thirdly I felt this might split us into denominations”. “Out of the 60 Scots”, he added, “some 45 regularly Communicated.”⁶¹¹

Article 17 of the 1929 Geneva Convention endorses the need for both intellectual and sporting pursuits by prisoners of war. The chaplains contributed to the lectures and courses of instruction in the camps. Eric Rankin noted in his war diary:

⁶⁰⁸ G.M.R. Bennett, “Oecumenism: A Prison Experience,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol.XXII, No.III, May 1969, p.12.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., p.12.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., p.12.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., p.13-14.

Heard of Peterhouse, [Professor Heard was a New Testament scholar from Peterhouse Cambridge,] conducted a very popular course on the Book of Acts in his POW camp. There were lectures by Padre Dunlop on “church furniture” and another course taken by Padre Read on “Dogmatics.” It was surprising how many laymen came to Read’s lectures. Amongst ourselves there were continual meetings for discussion and instruction of varying quality.⁶¹²

During his time in prison David Read put together a series of lectures on the basic questions of belief. A German guard discovered that Read had given this series of lectures and told him that before the war he had been a Lutheran Pastor. He agreed that if Read would promise not to send any coded messages in them, he would ensure that his lectures were sent to a publisher at home. Both men were true to their word and in April 1944, while Read was still a POW, SCM published Prisoners’ Quest, a presentation of the Christian Faith in a Prisoners of War Camp.⁶¹³

Many and varied were the lectures and talks given by men to their fellow inmates. Louden recorded in his diary that each morning at 11 o'clock, there were lectures and talks on a wide range of subjects.⁶¹⁴ The Anglican priest David Wild recalled that in the camp there were men of such varied professions and interests that it was possible to run weekly lectures on a wide variety of topics. Some of the most interesting lectures came from unexpected sources, such as a Lincolnshire Corporal who spoke with simple eloquence about fishing in the fens.”⁶¹⁵ Books were originally in short supply but through the good offices of the Red Cross and parcels from home some prison camps built up excellent libraries by the end of the war. According to Fulton: “With the help of the Protecting Power (Switzerland) Stalag XXB ultimately possessed a library of 2,000 technical books and 5,000 fiction, travel etc. books in

⁶¹² Rankin, War Diary, p.109.

⁶¹³ Read, This Grace Given, p.120.

⁶¹⁴ Louden, War Diary.

⁶¹⁵ Wild, p.66.

circulation among the 10,000 odd British prisoners of war in the 450 working parties throughout Poland and Prussia.”⁶¹⁶ Article 39 of the Geneva Convention (1929) stated that “prisoners of war shall be permitted to receive individually consignments of books which may be subject to censorship.”

Apart from reading some men learnt languages while others took professional and university examination papers. At Stalag Luft III, the prisoners complained that “no credit was given for science courses that required laboratory work, but full credit could be earned for courses in business, social science and the humanities.”⁶¹⁷

On a positive note the time spent in POW camp was put to good use by many chaplains and men. There was plenty of time for discussion on a whole range of subjects both religious and secular. David Read remembered that he had never before or since been so thoroughly questioned about the meaning of the Christian faith.

After the initial shock of being captured and taken to POW camp the chaplains like all POWs had to come to terms quickly with their new life. Many found the separation of officers from men to be hard and strenuous efforts were made to be allowed to visit the stalags. Many chaplains expressed their anxiety at being subjected to the dehumanizing conditions of prison. Initially they had few possessions: books, even bibles, in some camps were a rare luxury. Many found a new strength in their faith and believed that there was a strong bond of fellowship of shared suffering.

The chaplains knew they could not indulge in self-pity because more was expected of them. Some discovered a new freedom like that experienced by St. Paul in captivity. The Scottish chaplain David Read was struck when a friend said to him in a POW camp that it took the loss of everything to bring him face to face with God.

⁶¹⁶ Fulton, Stalag XXB notes.

⁶¹⁷ Durand, p.225.

Many prisoners began asking serious questions, as they were forced to reflect upon the meaning of life and where they were going, after everything that they and their friends had fought and sometimes died for, appeared to have been lost.

It was the experience of many chaplains that while regular Sunday services were held and quite well attended, it was the small group discussions and the one to one conversations that were most satisfying. Many soldiers guarded their manly image and would not naturally want to express their innermost secrets or fears. It was in this situation that the chaplain could be of greatest use. Read was convinced that POW life changed a person's values. Men began asking about what was important in their lives. And some turned to the chaplain looking for an answer. But in the dark and difficult conditions of the POW camps there were times when the chaplains themselves found it hard to pray and to see God in the midst of their confinement.

The Geneva Convention of 1929 clearly states that all Officers and NCOs above the rank of Corporal were exempt from work. This privilege applied to chaplains. However, as we have seen, many chaplains wanted to get out of the Oflag as soon as possible in order to live and work among the men in the stalags. When the Rev David Wild got himself transferred to Stalag XXA he discovered some 400 Warrant Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, mostly British, with about 50 French, "all of whom had exercised their right under the terms of the Genevan Convention to refuse any form of work except of a supervisory nature."⁶¹⁸ Some Senior NCOs, however, did volunteer to work, partly to remain in touch with their men and partly to combat the boredom. In some camps, moreover, those who worked got better food and conditions.

⁶¹⁸ Wild, p.22.

The Japanese often appeared completely to ignore the articles dealing with work and the use of forced labour as specified in the Geneva Convention. Men like Donald Smith, author of And All the Trumpets, and Earnest Gordon, who wrote Miracle on the River Kwai, testified that men in Japanese camps were forcibly put to work in the most appalling conditions. According to Gordon:

During the four years of their ascendancy the Japanese military violated every civilised code. They murdered prisoners overtly by bayoneting, shooting, drowning or decapitation; they murdered them covertly by working them beyond the limit of human endurance, starving them, torturing them and denying them medical care.⁶¹⁹

Gordon observed that four per cent of prisoners held by the Germans and Italians died in captivity, as compared with twenty-seven per cent of those in the hands of the Japanese.⁶²⁰

Perhaps surprisingly, Smith and his colleagues at Nong Pladuk camp were paid for their labours:

We worked hard and received pay every ten days. It was a mere pittance, of course, but it meant that we could buy little extra's at the camp canteen to supplement the daily diet... One was not paid if one were sick. Consequently, the hospital was not overcrowded.⁶²¹

In Germany the prisoners also received some payment for the labour. Not to pay the men would have reduced them to slavery. Most camps had a canteen and camp money was used to buy a variety of food and goods to supplement that which was issued by the camp or received through Red Cross parcels. At Colditz "Lagermarks" were the specially printed currency, which could be used in the canteen to buy "pencils and toothpaste and occasionally a little beer."⁶²²

⁶¹⁹ E. Gordon, Miracle on the River Kwai, (Fount/Harper Collins London 1963), p.46.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p.47.

⁶²¹ Smith, p.111.

⁶²² Duggan, p.29.

In Italy Stuart Louden also received a form of pay. From prison Hospital 203 he wrote:

We were paid in coupons (Buoni) and could buy ink and paper, a few sweets, mustard and pickles and a few other things in the canteen. The profits were, as laid down in the Geneva Convention, for the benefit of the prisoners, and were used for beautifying the cemetery, providing toilet paper and other sundry purposes.⁶²³

The Baptist Minister G.F. Miller said that each Sunday in the camp they took a church collection and with the money raised they bought a “grand piano”.⁶²⁴

Needless to say, as well as having a small money economy, there was also black marketing in the camps. According to Eric Rankin an exchange and mart system played a considerable part in camp economics.⁶²⁵ Louden recalled that the rigours of POW life brought out the best and the worst in the diverse characters. Once he met a private soldier who had “sold his bread ration for the whole of the next year to a fellow POW.”⁶²⁶

Many chaplains passed their time in the POW camps organising various sporting and entertainment events. In his war diary Eric Rankin remarked that “a great deal might be written about the entertainments provided for the camp. Earliest were our piano recitals. We were fortunate in having three or four good pianists...”⁶²⁷ It would not be long before concert parties and theatrical performances were being planned and produced. On Christmas Eve, 1943, Stuart Louden held a carol service in his POW camp: “The carols were sung by quite a good small officers’ choir with orchestral

⁶²³ Louden, *War Diary*, p.49.

⁶²⁴ Miller, p.97.

⁶²⁵ Rankin, *War Diary*.

⁶²⁶ Louden, *War Diary*.

⁶²⁷ Rankin, *War Diary*.

accompaniment and it was a fine atmosphere with the Christmas tree and candles.”⁶²⁸

The previous year the chief entertainment was a Christmas concert, which ran in two parts and was performed in four different areas of the prison hospital so that even the bed patients could see the show.⁶²⁹

David Read remembered well the concerts, plays, skits and musicals that were put on in the camps in which he was held: “Here they had two or three West End theatre directors and a number of actors in camp so the productions were of professional quality.”⁶³⁰ Read added that “our audiences were highly critical but appreciative. They especially enjoyed satire on camp life and subtle innuendoes that slipped past the German censor, who was always present.” On one occasion Read was present at a showing of a propaganda film about the 1936 Olympic games. The men were ordered to attend and were told that no derogatory remarks were to be made at the appearance of Herr Hitler on the silver screen. Later, as Hitler appeared flanked by two tall bodyguards, one of the soldiers in the audience shouted out: “Who’s the wee bugger in the middle?”⁶³¹

It was David Wild's experience that “apart from lectures and entertainment to pass the time, e.g. bridge, cricket, music and theatre, a number of men took exams and there was a good library. But few men did any serious reading, conditions of quiet and privacy being what they were.”⁶³² The lack of privacy was for many the greatest strain in POW life. So familiar were the surroundings and so well did the men know each

⁶²⁸ Loudon, War Diary.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Read, This Grace Given, p.114.

⁶³¹ In conversation with David Read.

⁶³² Wild, p.65.

other, that a man could sit looking out of the perimeter fence and know who it was walking behind him, without looking around.⁶³³

According to the Geneva Convention POWs were to be allowed to write home each month. These letters and cards were to be sent by the shortest route. Further it clearly states that “Not later than one week after the arrival in camp each prisoner shall be enabled to send a post card to his family informing them of his capture and the state of his health.” As will be seen, correspondence was a vital life line with home but prisoners were frustrated by the irregular nature of the mail system.

Mail was a vitally important way of keeping in touch with events at home and in the wider world. A number of camps had a camp newspaper or information board where news from home could be promulgated. During the war Life and Work, the Church of Scotland Magazine, regularly carried extracts of letters from POWs. In 1941, for example, the magazine published letters from three Church of Scotland POW chaplains: Rev Gordon Fraser (of the Old Parish Church in Nairn), Eric Rankin and David Read.⁶³⁴

As protected personnel with non-combatant status, the chaplains were often allowed out of the POW camps to go for a walk. This was a privilege but also a form of leisure which Stuart Loudon and others very much enjoyed. Yet as Loudon records in his war diary they were carefully controlled and always well guarded: “The first walk for the medical officers and myself took place on 19 November 1942, and after that they took place fairly regularly. On our walks, we had with us an escorting officer of the Vigilance, a carabinieri, an interpreter O.R. and a sentry.”⁶³⁵

⁶³³ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

⁶³⁴ Life and Work, Vol.XII, 1941, p.26.

⁶³⁵ Loudon, War Diary, p.50.

Any diversion or visit to the camp was always appreciated by the POWs. The Red Cross made regular visits to most camps and the men were able to express grievances and make comments about their treatment and conditions. Bill Burns recalls that when he was in a POW camp in Italy they received two unusual visitors. One came from the Waldensian Church in Italy. The second was by a Vatican representative who gave out religious medals to the men. This visit, no matter how well intentioned, was regarded as simple propaganda and was treated with great suspicion by the men.⁶³⁶

The Rev R.S. Loudon was imprisoned at Camp 65, near Gravina in Italy from July to September 1942. In his war diary he recorded the efforts the Italians made to prevent escape:

The machine gun posts in the watch-towers were manned day and night, and not only were there large numbers of sentries round the outside of the barbed wire, but small patrols scoured the nearby countryside for possible escapees! The men were counted twice per day and three times during the night: It was quite amusing to hide under the blankets, which made them inspect the bed very closely to ensure that it was not a dummy in it!⁶³⁷

Some serious moral questions faced all POWs and the chaplains in particular. Should they try to escape? Should a chaplain use his position of trust as a non-combatant and protected person to assist others in their attempts to escape? In September 1941 it was suddenly announced to the POWs at Laufen that some forty chaplains, doctors and wounded were about to be repatriated. They were speedily herded onto a train and sent to Rouen in France to await final confirmation of a prisoner exchange with German POWs held on the Isle of Man. They waited in Rouen for nearly three months before negotiations finally broke down and the men were taken

⁶³⁶ W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

⁶³⁷ Loudon, War Diary, p.44.

from their temporary camp on the racecourse at Rouen and returned to an Oflag in West Germany.

David Read, the Church of Scotland chaplain, and G.F. Miller, a Baptist chaplain, were amongst the group who failed to be repatriated. About this incident

Read wrote:

I served as official interpreter...My job was to wring concessions out of the local commandant, help in escapes, and boost the morale of our troops while depressing that of the German guards. His job was to keep us firmly under control and to prevent escapes. We were at war.⁶³⁸

Read firmly believed that it was his duty to assist escapees but also that he himself had a duty to stay in captivity and continue to minister to his fellow POWs. As Read described his situation:

I had the added responsibility of ministering to my colleagues and the thousand badly wounded who were waiting to return to the care of family and friends, and as camp interpreter it was my job to keep this curious group happy and hopeful, by means of negotiations in German, French and English.⁶³⁹

The Rev Bill Burns felt equally compelled to stay in the camps until final liberation. He had no real desire for early repatriation. He believed that a chaplain was not expected to try to escape. Besides, he too believed that the chaplain in the POW situation had a valuable job to do as minister to those in captivity.⁶⁴⁰

Other Scottish chaplains, however, were far less compliant or dismissive of the morality of escape. The Rev John Birnie Allan was determined from the moment of his capture to effect an escape. He was captured on the morning of 21 June 1942 and taken to a prisoner of war cage where he saw ten other chaplains. In a report which he wrote to the Chaplains' Committee describing his activities from June 1942 until

⁶³⁸ Read, This Grace Given, p.117.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

September 1945, he recounted that : “I decided there were sufficient chaplains in captivity and escaped in a car belonging to a German officer, only to be recaptured one and a half hours later.”⁶⁴¹

Back in captivity Birnie Allan was transferred with some others from Benghasi by air to Lecco. In his report he records the fact that the majority of the passengers foiled a plan of the minority to take over the plane (from Benghasi) and make for Malta. Here he first encountered with disappointment the: “Let us be good POWs spirit”, which in his opinion, “was too frequently repeated.”⁶⁴²

Birnie Allan served as a POW chaplain in the Bari transit camp from 1 July 1942 to 26 October 1942 and later at Modena camp until mid June 1943. Here he applied along with Rev Bill Burns to be transferred to one of the large men's camps in the area but this request was refused. Allan now made plans for his third escape attempt. In his report he noted: “This third attempt was in preparation when a letter was received from the Church of Scotland Chaplains Committee urging chaplains to stay in Italy with the troops.”⁶⁴³ Birnie Allen ignored this advice from the Church's committee, believing that there were plenty of other chaplains who could minister to the camps. He eventually broke camp on 9 September 1943 and entered Switzerland on 21 December 1943. There he found the Rev Peter Gordon, a United Board Chaplain, who had himself reached Switzerland in October 1943. Birnie Allan joined a team of chaplains who worked helping escaped POWs. The team included the Church of Scotland Minister at Lausanne, a Mr Campbell. Allan remained in Switzerland until September 1944. On 18 October 1944 Rev Birnie Allen's presence in Switzerland was

⁶⁴¹ J. Birnie Allan, Report on activities: June 21 1942 to Sep 28 1944. Held in the archives of the Church of Scotland Chaplains' Committee.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

noted at a meeting of the Church of Scotland Chaplain's Committee, which asked him to report on his escape and work in Switzerland.⁶⁴⁴

Another reluctant POW was the Scottish chaplain Murdo Ewen Macdonald. Only his wounds prevented him from resisting capture by the Afrika Korps, but his wounds did not prevent him from helping another officer blow up the plane that had brought them from Tunis to Naples on 20 December 1942. When asked about the moral questions raised by his involvement in this incident, Macdonald replied that: "The Germans were using aeroplanes illegitimately, by loading arms on Red Cross aircraft...."⁶⁴⁵ In Murdo Ewen's opinion the surgeon with whom he travelled was a "saint of a man" but he was also incensed by the abuses of the Germans. The two men therefore agreed to plant an incendiary device which destroyed the plane but killed no one.

In the Far East the Japanese severely punished anyone who attempted to escape, often with total disregard to the human rights outlined in the Geneva Convention. Both Donald Smith and Duncan Wilson recorded an incident at Changi prison where on 1 September 1942 the Japanese commander called upon the POWs to sign a pledge not to escape, in the belief that this would effectively stop all further bids for freedom. The prisoners, however, refused to sign the pledge and as a result they were marched from Changi prison to Selarang camp, where in Smith's words, "in comparison with Selarang the Black Hole of Calcutta faded into insignificance...a room for 40 held 400...there were no latrines and flies everywhere. By the evening of the first day dysentery was of epidemic proportion."⁶⁴⁶ The POWs still refused to sign.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

⁶⁴⁶ Smith, p.66.

Four days later the Japanese threatened that “all sick comrades in Changi hospital would be brought out to join them.”⁶⁴⁷ Before noon the Australian General Officer in Command agreed to sign on behalf of his men and that night they were marched back to Changi.

POW life raised all sorts of moral issues which the chaplains had to address both individually and collectively. The desire to escape was for most chaplains overwhelmed by the need to remain in captivity and minister to their men. Some, however, did escape, like Birnie Allan, while others did what they could to assist escape plans. Parole walks for example produced vital intelligence about the local geography beyond the camp. Ronald Selby Wright, moreover, a Church of Scotland chaplain who worked for the BBC in London during the war sending coded messages to POWs. (More will be said about Selby Wrights’ war-time ministry, as the “Radio Padre”, in the next chapter.)

A final word to conclude this section will now be said about death in the POW camps. According to Article 76 of the Geneva Convention of 1929, clear guidelines were agreed regarding the disposal of the bodies of those who died in the POW camp:

Article 76: The wills of prisoners of war shall be received and drawn up under the same conditions as for soldiers of the national armed forces. The same rules shall be followed as regards the documents relative to the certification of the death. The belligerents shall ensure that prisoners of war who have died in captivity are honourably buried, and that the graves bear the necessary indications and are treated with respect and suitably maintained.

It was generally the experience of British chaplains that the Germans in particular had a high regard for the dead soldier and that they were rigid in their adherence to the conditions prescribed in Article 76. Jock Platt, the Methodist chaplain at Colditz, wrote in his war diary of how one day he met a German chaplain at a funeral service in

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p.67.

the village outside Colditz. As Platt read the burial service, the German chaplain stood at the graveside and at the end saluted the British dead. A little later, Platt returned the compliment for the German dead.⁶⁴⁸

The Anglican chaplain, David Wild, recorded in his memoirs that “the coffins of British dead were draped with a union jack and given due ceremony by German guards.”⁶⁴⁹ Further, he noticed that the “men selected for the funeral party were always faultlessly turned out and took special pride in carrying out the simple ceremony.”⁶⁵⁰ For the soldier the opportunity to pay their last respects was always grasped, firstly because the next funeral could be theirs and secondly because of the comradeship of arms.

During his time as a POW David Read did not take many funerals. He later complimented the Germans for their treatment of British dead, not least as they usually allowed funerals to take place with full military honours, with German guards firing a volley of shots over the grave.⁶⁵¹ Read also mentioned, however, that the Russian dead did not receive such marks of respect from the Germans.

The treatment of Russian dead was something of which Bill Burns was very much aware. He knew that from the outset funerals were graded by the Germans: “The French were buried in boxes and in deep graves; the Russians who died were wrapped in paper and put in shallow graves, while the British were given a dignified burial.”⁶⁵²

Shortly after his capture in North Africa, Murdo Ewen Macdonald came across the body of his friend Kenneth Morrison lying at the side of a dirt track. He asked his

⁶⁴⁸ Duggan, p.18.

⁶⁴⁹ Wild, p.151.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ D.H.C. Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁶⁵² W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin, 6 July 1994.

Afrika Korps captors if he could bury his friend. Immediately German soldiers dismounted from the vehicles, “dug a grave and very gently lowered Ken into it.”⁶⁵³ From memory Macdonald recited the funeral service and after the words of committal, the Germans fired three volleys over the grave.

Finally, Donald Smith recalled in his book that under the Japanese regime with the high frequency of death it was hard to pay respects to every man who died:

After breakfast, the first funeral of the day passed me by. I stood stiffly at attention. A man standing near one looked across at me curiously. “You just come here?” he inquired. “Yes”, I replied, without moving my head. “I thought so”, said the stranger, “we’ve stopped standing to attention now,”...yesterday there were 21 deaths in the camp and 18 the day before...some of them die of debility; another name for a broken heart.⁶⁵⁴

Towards the end of the war the Japanese decided to build a large cemetery with a pagoda on the spot where many allied and Japanese dead lay. The Rev Gordon Bennett, a Church of Scotland Chaplain was set to work on the road leading into it. In an article in the RACHD Journal, he recalled:

I was pretty depressed as I wielded my ‘thumper’ knocking stones into the ground, and as I looked at the rows of graves of men, not killed in action but starved, maltreated and neglected to death...we were not allowed to inspect the graves, all I could make out was “Royal Marines” from where I worked; and I thought how easily one could take the turn in health, and be laid there beside them. But then God said to me, “See what Grand Company you'd be with.” That day I did not set out to expatiate on life after death, I was merely one who had been told to wield a thumper and make a road, but God was there to comfort and restore.⁶⁵⁵

The Scottish chaplains of the Second World War who ended up as POWs had a key role to play in prison life. They realised that when all else was stripped away they stood alone between God and their fellow man. Many chaplains found that holding

⁶⁵³ Macdonald, Padre Mac, p.91.

⁶⁵⁴ Smith, p.106.

⁶⁵⁵ Bennett, “The value of faith to Prisoners of War,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol.XXI, No.108, Nov 1967, p.30.

officer rank was at times more of a hindrance than a help. It prevented them getting to the Stalags and the work camps where most of the men were held. Conversely the fact that they held rank meant that they were given due respect by the German authorities in particular and the chaplain was able to influence to some small extent the way in which the POWs were treated. Chaplains like David Reid, who were fluent German speakers, could have ready access to the Camp Commandant and his staff.

Chaplains in the POW camps found it difficult living in such closely confined spaces with little privacy and even less peace and quiet. To maintain good self-discipline and a brave face all the time was asking a great deal from anyone, including a chaplain. They too became depressed and could easily identify with the man who simply gave up the will to live because he had lost all hope. Like other prisoners, the chaplains had families and friends at home with whom they had little contact.

The key to survival for the chaplain was to establish a clear role for himself in the prison community. This was quite difficult in some camps where there was a surplus of clergy and the religious duties had to be shared. But the chaplains could play a vital role. They had a duty as Christian ministers to keep hope alive and to provide a word of encouragement to those in need. They had to conduct services and lead daily prayers, bible studies and discussion groups on matters of faith. They administered the sacraments and prepared people for their first communion and membership of the Church. They provided a link with home and with things eternal.

Pastorally the Scottish chaplains found themselves with plenty of worthwhile work to do. Apart from the usual distress caused by separation from loved ones and the receipt of bad news from home, the chaplains worked with the depressed and the suicidal. They tended the sick and they buried the dead. As was their practice elsewhere, the chaplains were expected to write letters to the relatives and next of kin

of the wounded and the dead. They had an important role to play as mediator. Sometimes this would be between the Senior British Officer and the German, Italian or Japanese authorities. On other occasions the chaplain was called upon to mediate between fellow officers and inmates in the camps. There is even evidence to suggest that chaplains acted as theatre director, camp barber and occasional shopper when allowed out into the nearby towns or villages during parole walks. But to a man, like all POWs, they looked forward to the day of liberation.

PART 3. LIBERATION.

The Rev James Matheson was captured at Tobruk in June 1942 and ended up as a POW in Camp 43 in Italy. He was eventually released in June 1944 when the allies defeated the Italian Forces as they made their way through Italy. As defeat was imminent the Italian Guards opened the camp gates and allowed the POWs to go free. In fear of being picked up by the Germans, Matheson broke camp and met up with the advancing American forces near Torrento. When asked almost exactly fifty years later how this POW experience affected him, Matheson replied that it had changed his thinking and had given him new insight into human nature. It renewed his confidence in the spiritual dimension in human life, for he had witnessed in the camps how the spirit kept the POW alive! “When the spirit sank, hope left.”⁶⁵⁶

It was Matheson’s POW experience that showed him that there was a great respect for the Church wherever he went: “I felt the Church should be much less self-conscious, and much more conscious of the spirit which is everywhere. The line between Church and non-Church is one that can never be drawn. Some Church people

have less spirit than non-Church people. Indeed some non-Church people are more spirited.” His POW life taught him that you cannot easily categorise people. Two years as a prisoner of war taught Matheson that “faith cannot be defined in doctrines but an ability to see in every situation the reality that is behind it all, and that that reality is God.”⁶⁵⁷ Fifty years on Dr. Matheson reflected on his war-time days: “I’m very grateful of [sic] my war experience. It gave me an understanding of human nature, its capacity and its spiritual need.”⁶⁵⁸

Like Matheson another Scottish chaplain, the Rev Bill Burns, was also captured in North Africa in June 1942. It was Maundy Thursday, 19 March 1945, before he too was liberated from the soldiers’ camp, Stalag XII A, where he had been working. As the camp was about to be over-run his captors decided to put the POWs on a train heading East. The train was attacked by Allied aircraft before it came to a halt in a cutting. The men took shelter in a railway tunnel and as it was Palm Sunday 1945 they asked for an impromptu service which Burns conducted. Eventually the POWs were set free and they waited until the Allies caught up.

Burns was eventually repatriated via America. He was sent on six months resettlement leave but was recalled after six weeks and told to report to a new job with the 10th Infantry Training Centre in Edinburgh. He continued to serve as an Army chaplain after the war and eventually returned to the parish ministry in 1951.

Fifty years after his release Burns still “often” thinks about his prison days. He confesses that he no longer has the nightmares that he had experienced.⁶⁵⁹ His wife believed that the experience of being a POW changed him for the better: “I had

⁶⁵⁶ J. Matheson, Taped interview, Skye, 13 June 1994

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

mellowed”, he mused. He was certain that despite all that he had seen and done, his view of the Church had not changed. He believed that the Church is the same wherever you are and that its purpose does not change.

From 12 June 1940 until Good Friday, 20 March 1945 the Rev D.H.C.Read was a POW. He and a medical officer had found their way to a soldiers’ camp in Laufen in Bavaria when they were liberated by the American 3rd Army: “We were in a daze; it didn’t seem true. A young Scottish soldier came up to me and opened a Bible to Psalm 126. ‘When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,’ I read, we were like them that dream.”⁶⁶⁰

Unashamedly Read admitted that five years as a POW had left their mark on him: “I was not quite the same person who returned to civilian ministry.”⁶⁶¹ “Going home,” he added, “was a curious mix of enormous elation and a kind of disbelief that life had been going on.”⁶⁶² One thing he found hard to get used to was that people at a bus stop would talk to one another for no apparent reason: “In POW camp we had given up all unnecessary talk...we always asked new POWs, ‘are we crazy’.”⁶⁶³

Another area of his post-POW life which Read found difficult was preaching. In the POW camps the men knew each other intimately. Now he had to rediscover a different humour and language from that which he had used for the previous five years.

Read in the epilogue to his book This Grace Given, describes his POW life:

It was like a postgraduate course in Christian anthropology, which is an elaborate way of saying that I learned more about human nature (including my

⁶⁵⁹ W.G. Burns, Taped interview, Brechin 6 July 1994.

⁶⁶⁰ D.H.C. Read, This Grace Given, p.127.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁶⁶² D.H.C.Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

own) at its highest and lowest points than I could ever have known in the limited circles to which a conventional ministry would have confined me.⁶⁶⁴

Summing up his time as a POW Read stated that “many religious beliefs and practices, many hasty judgments and prejudices were shaken up and winnowed in the sieve of prison life.”⁶⁶⁵ Theologically Read found prison had a “broadening” effect upon him. Post-war his theology was not so dogmatic as it had been before being called up. He believed that Christ died for this world but that many people had died for its freedom.⁶⁶⁶ In prison camp he had a lot of time to read and to reflect on his theological position.

Read discovered in prison a new sympathy for the unbeliever and the extraordinary Catholicity of the Christian gospel. He was constantly amazed at the unsearchable riches of Christ to the extent that he believed that his prison ministry was the most fulfilling ministry in his whole career.⁶⁶⁷

Read did not find adjusting to life after the camps easy: “We had all changed. The world had changed. Some POWs missed the prison regime and broke down unable to cope with freedom. Once a year I still have a nightmare that we will never get out of the camp.”⁶⁶⁸

The men of Stalag VII A were liberated on Sunday 29 April 1945. They included the Scottish chaplains Eric Rankin and Murdo Ewen Macdonald. Rankin described the liberation in his war diary:

[It was] a little after mid-day that the first of Patton’s tanks arrived and came through the main gate. Surrender was instant and complete...we had no feeling but that of simple satisfaction. There was no jubilation. We were hungry and

⁶⁶⁴ D.H.C.Read, *This Grace Given*, pp.129-130.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ D.H.C.Read, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 19 Mar 1993.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

thirsty, and likely to remain so for a while; the war was not yet over; and the change was too big even in its most immediate consequences to grasp for a time. We were free; that was enough.⁶⁶⁹

On reflection after nearly fifty years, Murdo Ewen Macdonald claimed that he “enjoyed” his POW experience. His wife said that it was “possibly his greatest ministry.” For despite the hell of war he believed he reaped the benefit in his post-war ministry. It gave him “deeper insights into human nature...it was a broadening and a humanising experience. I returned a different person.”⁶⁷⁰

The war in the Far East continued until 14 August 1945 when the Japanese government agreed to unconditional surrender and V.J. day was declared on 15 August. Donald Smith remembered well his moment of release:

A British soldier came into the camp. “You are free,” he said, “the Japanese surrendered three days ago.” He handed me a cigarette, but my lips trembled so much that it fell to the ground. I did not realise what this man was telling me. The war was over...A great wave of thankfulness swept over me, smothering my heart. My eyes were hot and smarting, and at last a sob burst from my lips...I could not halt the flow of those pent up tears.⁶⁷¹

Smith had been captured on 15 February 1942 and was released on 18 August 1945.

Finally the Rev Gordon Bennett was released from Japanese prison camp in early September 1945 after over three years in captivity. In an article to the Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal in 1969, summed up his experiences: “No wonder I still think of this as my most wonderful charge. After all, I had a captive audience and the camp was so small that some didn’t need to leave their huts to listen to me preach.”⁶⁷² Bennett returned to Hong Kong a number of times after his release.

⁶⁶⁹ Rankin, War Diary, pp.120-121.

⁶⁷⁰ Murdo Ewen Macdonald, Taped interview, Glasgow, 11 Mar 1994.

⁶⁷¹ D Smith, And all the Trumpets, p.191.

⁶⁷² G.M.R.Bennett, “Oecumenism: A Prison Experience,” article, Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Journal, Vol. XXII, No. III, May 1969, p.14.

In November 1965 he returned with a group of former inmates to visit the camp where they had been held and to pay their last respects to those who had died in captivity. On his return home he wrote:

The business is finished, the wreaths have all been laid, but we all have memories, not least this chaplain who found in camp that you don't need preciseness of denominational practice, you don't need liberty, you can do with little food, if the Lord will still provide. You don't even need a Church building. Given trust in God, and if you wait patiently for him, man may think it unto evil, but God meant it unto good.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷³ G.M.R.Bennett, "Unfinished business in Hong Kong," article, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, Vol XXI, No.104, Mar 1966, p.9.

CHAPTER SIX
ALTERNATIVE WAR-TIME MINISTRY

During the Second World War the Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces constantly monitored the levels of supply and demand for chaplaincy cover in all three services. The Committee kept the need for chaplaincy recruitment continually before the Church and its appeals for additional ministers to serve alongside the forces were always met. The majority of new chaplains served with the Army, but many others served with the Navy and the Air Force.

The Church at home was put under increasing pressure as more and more ministers left their congregations for war-service. Presbyteries were constantly struggling to meet congregational demands and provide ministerial cover. Many ministers, moreover, took on additional war-time duties at home. The Church of Scotland Committee on National Service, for example, encouraged Kirk ministers to undertake fire watching and air-raid precaution training and many church halls were used as temporary classrooms and meeting places for both civilian and military purposes.

When war broke out in 1939 the Church of Scotland resurrected the idea of providing Huts and Canteens facilities for the troops both at home and overseas. This form of war-time ministry attracted a number of Church of Scotland ministers, such as T.F. Torrance, who might otherwise have become Army chaplains. The Huts and Canteens organization both complemented and supported the work being done by the chaplains and in many places, where there was no regular Army chaplains available, the clergy with the Huts and Canteens acted as Officiating Chaplains to the Forces (OCFs).

Another area of ministry in which the Church of Scotland was actively involved during the Second World War was that of religious broadcasting. The BBC began radio broadcasting in 1922. By 1924 there were over one million license holders and by 1934 over ten million. This medium was recognised as a relatively cheap, accessible

and reliable method of diffusing information across the nation. The first Scottish radio station opened in Glasgow on 6 March 1923 and St Cuthbert's Church of Scotland Church in Edinburgh was the venue for Scotland's first radio pulpit, when a service there was broadcast in 1929.

During the inter-war years a number of prominent Scottish Churchmen and veterans of the First World War, including George MacLeod, John White, Ronnie Falconer and White Anderson became regular broadcasters. But the cause of the Church of Scotland and the development of radio broadcasting in Scotland received its greatest boost when in 1933 the Rev Melville Dinwiddie was appointed as Director and Controller of BBC Scotland. Dinwiddie, the son of a Scottish manse, had served with the Gordon Highlanders and on the General Staff during the First World War. As well as reaching the rank of Major, he had been awarded the DSO, OBE, MC and a Mention in Despatches. After the war he took his B.D. at Edinburgh University, and was ordained and inducted to St. Machar's Cathedral Aberdeen, where he remained from 1925-33.⁶⁷⁴

The Second World War had a dramatic effect upon religious broadcasting. Daily services and the Sunday epilogue became a great source of spiritual comfort to many people. The Radio Times and The Listener, as well as local newspapers, carried full details of religious services and even printed excerpts from broadcast services. As hostilities increased intercessory prayers were broadcast after the nine o'clock news each evening. Soon special services were planned for the BBC's war-time schedule. A Sunday half-hour of community singing and a thought for the day called 'Life up your hearts' began in Scotland in December 1939 and both were very popular. But for our purposes here it was the introduction in 1941 of a Church of Scotland chaplain, "The Radio Padre," into the BBC Forces Programme that is most significant.

This chapter will examine, in the form of two case studies, the alternative war-time ministry of some Church of Scotland clergymen during the 1939-45 War. The

⁶⁷⁴ Melville Dinwiddie, Religion By Radio, (London 1968), foreword by Lord Reith, p.7.

first case study explores the innovative work of the Church of Scotland in providing the forces with canteen and welfare support both at home and overseas, through the General Assembly's Committee on Hut and Canteen Work, giving particular attention to the war-time ministry of T.F. Torrance. The second case study highlights religious broadcasting and especially the unique war-time role of the Rev Ronald Selby Wright, the minister of the Canongate Church, Edinburgh, who became the "Radio Padre."

CASE STUDY 1

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND HUTS AND CANTEENS

"THE KIRK O' JOCKS"⁶⁷⁵

During the First World War the Scottish Churches' Huts were a familiar sight to soldiers serving both at home and overseas. They were places where soldiers could relax, obtain refreshment, read a newspaper and find books and writing materials. In 1914 the task of providing a welfare facility for the troops north of the border had been seen to be too great for one church to manage and therefore the Church of Scotland had invited the United Free Church of Scotland to share equally in the venture. In 1916 a Scottish Churches' canteen was opened in Etaples in France. The Churches' Huts and Canteens work was praised by many including the Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. After the war most of the Churches' work in support of the military was wound up and some of the Church of Scotland funds for Huts and Canteens were transferred to the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces.

The prospect of another war resulted in a special meeting of the General Administrative Committee of the Church of Scotland being held on 31 January 1939, to consider the position of the Church in respect to National Service. This meeting appointed a committee, under the title of "The Committee on Church and National

⁶⁷⁵ This was the nickname given to the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens during the war. It was a name that symbolised both affection and appreciation for all that the Church of Scotland was trying to do and indirectly it was for many Scottish soldiers a link with home.

Service”, representative of the various standing committees of the General Assembly, “to prepare a scheme for the mobilisation of the forces and the resources of the Church in such ways as would best enable the Church to continue to discharge its spiritual mission to the nation, and also undertake any special additional tasks that might be laid upon the Church at such a time of crisis.”⁶⁷⁶ John White was named convener and Charles L. Warr, minister of St Giles, was made deputy convener.

Three days before war broke out this Committee decided to appoint a Sub-Committee “with executive powers to deal with the provision and maintenance of Church Huts.”⁶⁷⁷ Warr was invited to serve as convener of the Huts and Canteens sub-committee with the Rev Louis L.L. Cameron as Secretary.

The Huts sub-committee met on 31 August and again on 7 September 1939 when it decided to seek General Assembly approval to appeal for funds to support a programme of huts and canteens for the Scottish troops. Authority was granted and an appeal was made for £50,000. By May 1940, however, the sub-committee reported that only half of the original funding had been secured.⁶⁷⁸

The initial idea of providing welfare support exclusively for Scottish troops quickly proved to be unworkable, as Scottish soldiers were spread across many different units and formations. The Church therefore decided to open its canteens to all servicemen and women. It was Warr’s contention from the outset that while the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens “were primarily intended for Scottish people and were to be impregnated with a Scottish atmosphere...The same cordial welcome was to be extended to men and women from whatever part of the Empire they might come, belonging to any religious denomination or to none.”⁶⁷⁹ In Louis Cameron’s opinion the Church would gain significant advantages by actively engaging in this work:

⁶⁷⁶ Committee on Church and National Service, Reports, May 1939, p.935.

⁶⁷⁷ Special Committee on Church and National Service, Reports, May 1940, p.735.

⁶⁷⁸ Special Committee on Church and National Service, Reports, May 1940, p.743.

⁶⁷⁹ C.L. Warr, Glimmering Landscapes, p.235.

Men and women might not understand the creeds or be enthusiastic about organized religion, but when the Christian Church showed its concern by seeking to meet their social, material and spiritual needs, many were compelled to take a second look at the faith they had so lightly repudiated.⁶⁸⁰

From the outset, the Huts and Canteens committee defined three main objectives. Firstly, they would ensure that each hut and canteen had a chapel in which evening prayers could be held each evening and where a Sunday service would be held each week. These chapels were to be at the disposal not only of Church of Scotland chaplains, but also of the chaplains of all religious traditions who wished to use it. Warr later wrote: “The spiritual side of our work was carried out on the broadest interdenominational lines. We did not regard ourselves as a particular denomination in action, but as Scottish religion organized in common service.”⁶⁸¹ In one particular chapel regular Sunday services were held by Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Jewish padres.⁶⁸² The committee also arranged to supply free editions of Weymouth’s New Testament in Modern Speech to any soldier who cared to ask for a copy. According to Cameron, “nearly a hundred thousand copies were circulated throughout the period of the war.”⁶⁸³

The second main objective of the Church of Scotland Huts was to provide for the physical comfort of the troops.⁶⁸⁴ Wherever possible, existing buildings and other facilities were used, but where nothing suitable existed a purpose-built facility would be provided by the Church. The hut or canteen was to be made as bright, cheerful and homely as possible, while the catering was to be of the highest possible standard. The Rev Leonard Small, a Church of Scotland minister, recalled that the Navy, Army and Air Force Institute (NAAFI) had built a new welfare facility for the troops based near Castle Douglas in South West Scotland but that the facility was rarely used, because

⁶⁸⁰ L.L.L. Cameron, Opportunity My Ally, (London 1965), p.148.

⁶⁸¹ Warr, p.240.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ L.L.L. Cameron, Opportunity My Ally, p.149.

⁶⁸⁴ L.L.L. Cameron, A Badge To Be Proud Of, “A History of the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens 1939-1972,” (Edinburgh 1972), p.5.

the men preferred the more homely atmosphere that they found in a converted four-storey dwelling house that had been turned into a Church of Scotland canteen.⁶⁸⁵

The third main objective for the Huts and Canteens committee was to ensure that each hut had “an adequate supply of writing materials with the crest of the Church of Scotland at the top [of each sheet of paper], and that this should be freely available to all soldiers.”⁶⁸⁶ The intention of the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens committee was something much more than creating a place for physical refreshment: “It was to be a place where the witness of the Church would be evident, where men and women would have quiet in which to write letters to their friends at home and where there would be a small Chapel in which to pray.”⁶⁸⁷

The provision of welfare facilities for the troops at home and overseas was a complex operation which required a degree of War Office co-ordination. To this end, a meeting was arranged on 7 November 1939, under the chairmanship of Major General Sir T.S. Riddell Webster, the Deputy Quartermaster General. This meeting led to the formation of the Council of Voluntary War Work (C.V.W.W.)⁶⁸⁸ The Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens were in great demand and by the end of 1939 there were almost 100 centres throughout Scotland. The committee was also in communication with Army chaplains and Commanding Officers serving with Scottish units abroad, and regular supplies of stationery and games were sent to the units.

During the period of the phoney war, boredom and inactivity, especially amongst the troops in France, highlighted the need for better welfare facilities. At the end of 1939, Louis Cameron made a reconnaissance visit to France, on behalf of the Huts Committee. As a result of Cameron’s report, Professor Edward P. Dickie of St. Andrews University, who was also an M.C. of the First World War, was given leave of

⁶⁸⁵ R.L.Small, Taped interview, Edinburgh 3 Nov 1993.

⁶⁸⁶ L.L.L. Cameron, *A Badge To Be Proud Of*, p.5.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.148.

⁶⁸⁸ This council comprised of representatives from all three services in the armed forces, plus a representative from the Catholic Women’s league, the Church Army (representative the Church of England), the Church of Scotland, the Methodist and United Church Boards, the Salvation Army, TOC H, the YMCA, YWCA and later the Women’s Voluntary Service.

absence from the university and was appointed from 1 April 1940 as General Superintendent for the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens work in France. Overseas the Church worked closely with the YMCA amongst whose workers were included Professor John Baillie of New College, Edinburgh, and the Rev Ray Davey of the Irish Presbyterian Church.⁶⁸⁹

Despite being authorised by the C.V.W.W. and encouraged by the War Office, the Church of Scotland could accomplish little overseas without the support of the military formations on the ground and the Chaplains' Department in particular. It was fortunate, therefore, that when Louis Cameron went to France to assess what his organisation could do to help, he was enthusiastically welcomed by and received some good and sympathetic advice from the Rev Alan M. Davidson, a Church of Scotland minister, who was then Deputy Assistant Chaplain General (D.A.C.G.) at 2nd Corps Headquarters.⁶⁹⁰

Wherever the Huts and Canteens organisation went, they relied heavily upon chaplains for information and especially for assistance with finding transport and fuel. Initially the organisation was unprepared for the rapid movements of the Second World War battlefield. Cameron was later to reflect that "we may have been the victims of a 1914-18 mentality thinking in terms of static positions without giving sufficient thought to the need for mobility."⁶⁹¹ If the Scottish Huts were to keep up with the fluidity of the new battle conditions, they needed to become more mobile. The Church subsequently decided to fund the purchase of a number of specially adapted vehicles which could be used as mobile canteens.

In the view of the Rev Leonard Small the Church of Scotland Huts not only supplemented the work of the chaplains among the troops but on occasions plugged a gap where there was no military chaplain to be found. When Small went to France in

⁶⁸⁹ Ray Davey was captured and became a German POW but in later life he was to return to Ireland where he founded the Corrymeela Community in 1967.

⁶⁹⁰ L.L.L. Cameron, *Opportunity My Ally*, p.155.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.159.

1940 to serve with the Huts, he was on a three-month leave of absence from his parish in Kilmarnock. He had been appointed to a team of six ministers who were sent out to establish Church Canteens in France and the Low Countries.⁶⁹² Here he discovered Church of Scotland ministers and deaconesses ministering to thousands of servicemen in places, like the main railway station at Amiens, where it was not possible to employ a regular Army chaplain full-time.

In the Huts regular services were conducted by the Church of Scotland staff.

Small later described these as:

Very simple, general services. The congregation were anything and nothing as far as religion was concerned, they just wanted something to hold on to from these services...The theme of Romans Chapter 8 [where it is written that nothing in life or in death can ever separate us from the love of God] comes to mind...For this was the one realistic thing we had to offer.⁶⁹³

Small added that for many of them the Church of Scotland canteen, club or gift shop was the “physical representation of all that the Church stood for, because it showed the men that the Church cared about them.”⁶⁹⁴

All the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteen workers managed to escape when the German Army overran France in the early summer of 1940, though they left behind an estimated £20,000 worth of Huts, canteen equipment and vehicles.⁶⁹⁵ After Dunkirk, Leonard Small still had two months remaining of his leave of absence and therefore volunteered to serve with the Huts in the far North and West of Scotland. Here there was little or no regular chaplaincy cover from the Navy, Army and Air Force, so the way was open for local clergy and those serving with the Huts to act as Officiating Chaplains. At Kyle of Lochalsh, for example, there was a subsidiary Fleet Base for mine-laying. Here all three services were represented, with soldiers from the Cameron Highlanders guarding the base; Navy personnel manning the ships and

⁶⁹² R.Leonard Small, The Holy Goalie, (Edinburgh 1993), p.31.

⁶⁹³ R.L. Small, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Nov 1993.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ L.L.L. Cameron. A Badge To Be Proud Of, p.31.

members of the RAF controlling the balloon barrage that guarded the anchorage.⁶⁹⁶ Small acted as chaplain on behalf of the military authorities.

On returning to his parish Small continued to work as an Officiating Chaplain to the Anti-Aircraft and Searchlight posts that were stationed nearby. He also became one of four area Superintendents in Scotland, helping to co-ordinate and focus the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens at home. It was Small's belief that the people of Scotland expected the Church of Scotland to act as the National Church, taking the lead in providing welfare support for the troops. At home the Church could utilise the churches' membership and church halls as temporary Huts wherever they were needed. In Small's opinion "Congregations expected the Church to do this Huts work."⁶⁹⁷ Yet as Charles Warr, convener of the sub-committee on Huts and Canteens had to point out to the General Assembly in the early stages of the war, the level of financial support the Huts and Canteens work received from the Church as a whole, was disappointing.

As early as May 1940 the General Assembly had been informed by the Committee on Church and National Service that there were two main problems facing the Huts sub-committee's work: first, the recruitment of personnel, especially clergy, and second, the procurement of adequate financial support. There appears to have been an initial reluctance on the part of ministers to volunteer to serve at home and it was difficult, if not impossible, to place women workers in either the Northern Isles of Scotland or the combat zone in France. At the same time, the cost of supporting Hut work was rising as the demand increased.

In May 1942 Charles Warr pointed out to the General Assembly that during the 1914-18 War, ministers had volunteered freely for Hut work and that their services were given without cost to the Scottish Churches. But, he added, "this war the situation has been entirely different. In almost every case where a minister has offered to serve with the Church's Huts, his pulpit supply, or the cost of a locum tenens, has

⁶⁹⁶ Small, *The Holy Goalie*, p.33.

⁶⁹⁷ R L Small, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Nov 1993.

had to be paid by the committee.” “A Hut worker,” continued Warr, “is on a wholly different footing from an Army chaplain, who has his military pay with which to meet his pulpit supply.”⁶⁹⁸ (By drawing a military salary as an Army chaplain the Church was no longer having to find the ministers stipend and therefore could support a locum in his absence.)

By May 1942 the capital debt accrued by the Huts and Canteens work of the Church of Scotland was estimated at £60,000. As a result the committee was forced to abandon all further building work and to reject any further requests for help from Army chaplains or elsewhere. The whole future of the Huts organisation was now in jeopardy. Warr appealed to the General Assembly, to the Church as a whole, and to the nation at large, via a national publicity campaign. In less than eight months, the whole debt had been cleared and the Huts work was able to proceed with a credit balance. By 1942 the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens were maintaining 44 huts, 203 canteens and recreation centres and 40 mobile canteens in the United Kingdom alone. In addition, in the Middle East Duncan MacGillivray, the Church of Scotland minister of St Andrews, Jerusalem, and Middle Eastern Superintendant for Huts work, ran 13 huts, hostels and canteens and 5 specially adapted mobiles.⁶⁹⁹

The report of the Huts and Canteens committee to the General Assembly of 1943 acknowledged that there was now broader support for its work on the part of Church members. For the first time since the war started all centres were fully staffed and there was a greatly increased number of ministers volunteering for Huts work. One of those who joined the Huts and Canteens organisation in the spring of 1943 was the Rev T.F. Torrance.

Torrance had been licensed for the Church of Scotland ministry by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in March 1937, later that year he won a scholarship that enabled him to pursue postgraduate studies with Barth in Basel, Switzerland. As Torrance later recalled:

⁶⁹⁸ Committee on Huts and Canteens Work for H.M. Forces, Reports, May 1941, p.647.

⁶⁹⁹ Committee on Huts and Canteens Work for H.M. Forces, Reports, May 1942, p.651.

A postgraduate fellowship took me to Basel where I spent an epoch-making year, when my studies in dogmatics blended with my innate evangelical convictions and missionary impulse. Barth thought that I was too young (!) to write a doctoral dissertation on the scientific basis and structure of theology, and so I was steered into another field in which my missionary outlook and patristic concern came together, in "The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers." ... When I returned to Edinburgh after that year Professor John Baillie who had succeeded W.P. Paterson at New College, put considerable pressure on me to take up a teaching post at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York State, where Baillie himself had been professor for a number of years. The post had suddenly become vacant and Baillie had been asked to find someone to fill it - and so I was channeled by the guidance of the Lord into my academic career.⁷⁰⁰

Torrance was twenty - five years of age, when, during 1938-39, he went to Auburn where he was to spend a very full year, which he regarded as "one of the most important in my theological and spiritual development."⁷⁰¹ Events in 1939, however, interrupted this stage in Torrance's intellectual development. First, he was asked to apply for a position in theology at Princeton and second the War intervened. The job at Princeton had been created in a new department of religion in the university, which was distinct from Princeton Theological Seminary. His name was put forward by Emil Brunner who was lecturing there at the time.⁷⁰² Torrance was duly appointed to the position in June 1939.

Three days after his appointment, Torrance was walking with Emil Brunner. The news reports were full of predictions about the outbreak of war. As the two men discussed their situation and what they might do if war was declared, Brunner turned to Torrance and said, "I think you and I ought to go back before the submarines start."⁷⁰³ Torrance immediately withdrew from his new appointment and made plans to return to Scotland with the intention of becoming an Army chaplain.

⁷⁰⁰ Thomas F. Torrance to Fr Dr Jean Yves Lacoste, 29 Sep 1990, copy, Torrance family papers in the possession of Dr Iain Torrance of Aberdeen University.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh 23 Feb 1994.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

On his return home Torrance discovered that there was already a two-year waiting list of ministers who had volunteered to become Army chaplains and so he went to Oriel College, Oxford, to continue his studies. He worked in Oxford to complete his thesis for Barth at Basel and he became involved in the University Mission:⁷⁰⁴ “I had hoped to stay longer in Oxford,” he later recalled, “but the Kirk put pressure on me to take over a parish ministry in Scotland.”⁷⁰⁵ On 20 March 1940 Torrance was ordained and inducted to Alyth Barony Church in Perthshire where he remained until the spring of 1943. Here he became a busy parish minister looking after a large rural congregation and a larger number of Polish refugees. But he found time to continue his academic work, completing his thesis and studying the works of John Calvin.⁷⁰⁶

In the spring of 1943 feeling the general pressure of the time and reflecting on the relatively easy and safe life that he enjoyed in Scotland, Torrance felt compelled to try again to enlist as an Army chaplain. However, when he went to Edinburgh he happened to run into Charles Warr, the convener of the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens committee, who informed Torrance that he had just come from a committee meeting and that they needed someone to work with the Huts in the Middle East. This appealed to Torrance as he knew the Middle East from his student days and was keen to return to the region. Torrance now decided to join the Church of Scotland Huts.

Despite the difficulties of getting civilians aboard troopships heading for the Middle East, (even those destined to work in support of the military), he was soon given passage from Liverpool on a ship carrying reinforcements for the Highland Division. There were a large number of Scots on this ship and Torrance acted as chaplain to them during the long seven to eight week voyage. During the cruise south Torrance persuaded the military authorities to give a man a new identity who had been

⁷⁰⁴ T.F. Torrance, letter to Fr Dr Jean-Yves Lacoste.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

captured but escaped from the Germans in an earlier stage in the war, and who feared that if he was captured again he would be killed.⁷⁰⁷

Torrance left the troopship in Algiers but as there was little he could accomplish there, he hitched a lift to Tobruk where he met Duncan MacGillivray, the Superintendent for the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens' Middle Eastern operation. Torrance was tasked by MacGillivray to go to Tunis where he would be given a three ton truck and a soldier driver from the Black Watch, and sent on a typical Huts and Canteens mission, to deliver a large quantity of Turkish delight and other Canteen provisions to the Scots Greys in Tripoli, a journey of some 4,000 miles.

After a period of six months working with the Huts, Torrance was called to Cairo to meet the Assistant Chaplain General (A.C.G.), the Rev Frank Alexander, who suggested that Torrance might be more usefully employed in support of a unit in Italy. Torrance was subsequently attached to the 10th Indian Division, with whom he stayed for the remainder of the war.⁷⁰⁸ It is significant that although Torrance was not an Army chaplain he was answerable to the senior chaplain and was given both guidance and direction by the Chaplains' Department. In turn the A.C.G. arranged for Torrance and his mobile canteen⁷⁰⁹ to be transported with the tanks and equipment to Brindisi.

Near Ortona in Italy, his unit came under enemy artillery fire. In action Torrance tried to locate himself with the regimental stretcher bearers. On one occasion he found two men hiding from in-coming enemy fire and trying desperately to pray: "They were praying the prayers that they had been taught at their mother's knee."⁷¹⁰ Later, towards the end of the War, Torrance picked up a piece of paper fluttering by the roadside, on which he discovered a prayer written by a German soldier. In Torrance's opinion this prayer could only have been written by a man who did not understand the Christian Faith but was searching for God: "He did not know anything

⁷⁰⁷ T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh 23 Feb 1994.

⁷⁰⁸ L.L.L. Cameron, A Badge To Be Proud Of, p.86.

⁷⁰⁹ A Mobile Canteen was a vehicle or collection of vehicles from which Huts and Canteens personnel provided catering and welfare support.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

about God but he was crying out of the dark to whoever was there.”⁷¹¹ Torrance later maintained.

When asked in 1994 how he could explain, theologically, a man grasping for God when he does not know God, Torrance replied: “We are all made for God. Our relationship with Him is ruptured and it is that relationship that comes through in times of desperation.”⁷¹² A few days after finding the wayside prayer, Torrance came across a British Army chaplain friend, the Rev Charles Cranfield⁷¹³, who while looking after several hundred German prisoners of war found amongst the German soldiers Ernst Kasemann of Tübingen, a university professor who was serving as a common soldier. There were no German padres to be found. After this meeting with Cranfield, Torrance said that he began to look upon the enemy in a new way, seeing them as “sheep without a shepherd.”⁷¹⁴ He was convinced that Casemann had much more to offer than merely serving as a infantry soldier.

Although Torrance’s primary role and responsibility was to the Huts and Canteens business, he was in all other respects working as an Army chaplain:

In Italy I had a strange job, I had 17 vehicles, 3 tonners and others, in the mobile canteen, so whenever we captured a new village or town, the first thing I did was to commandeer the local bakery and set them to work baking bread for the men. But in all other respects I worked as a regimental chaplain with a battalion, because there were not enough chaplains for every regiment.⁷¹⁵

The General Commanding the 10th Indian Division, General Denys Reid, whose father had been a Church of Scotland minister, asked Torrance on a number of occasions to visit units where he wanted an independent opinion as to their true state of morale. Torrance visited the Durham Light Infantry on one such mission and found

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid. Cranfield later became Professor of Theology at Durham and his two daughters Mary and Elizabeth were ordained into the Church of Scotland Ministry.

⁷¹⁴ L.L.L. Cameron, A Badge To Be Proud Of, p.91.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

a Church of England chaplain who, in Torrance's opinion, was both lazy and resentful of any interference. On another occasion Torrance went to visit the 8th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment where he reported back a serious morale problem and a general lethargy due to war weariness. The General accepted Torrance's advice and the unit were taken out of the line and given time to regroup.⁷¹⁶ Here Torrance was acting as any good regular chaplain might have done, but he felt personally that he had greater freedom and latitude as a civilian minister. He was allowed to speak his mind, even to the most senior of officers.⁷¹⁷

The leader of the Church of Scotland Hut was often the only minister that the men saw but occasionally he worked closely in support of the regular chaplain. During the Italian campaign, for example, Torrance formed a close working relationship with the Rev Bill Beresford, the regular chaplain to the King's Own Royal Rifles, and a minister of the Church of Ireland.

Torrance served in Egypt, Palestine, North Africa and Italy with the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation but it was in Italy that he witnessed the most bloodshed. On one particular night operation in the Italian mountains, Torrance and Beresford moved forward with the fighting companies from the King's Own Royal Rifles, whose mission was to dislodge a well-defended enemy position. A Ghurka Battalion had attempted and failed to take this position the previous day. Torrance had walked the route leading up to the enemy position when the Ghurkas' advance failed, and as he had already seen the ground over which the advance was to be made, he was therefore in a good position to lead the King's Own Royal Rifles Companies into their assault positions:

Suddenly, all hell broke loose, as out of the darkness the air was filled with gun-fire. It was made worse by the fact that we were in a farming area and several pigs had been shot. The squealing and noise of the pigs in the midst of battle was absolutely terrible. I found myself up against a wall and got inside a door, with some difficulty. Tracer bullets shot across my stomach and I

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

remember praying about that. Beresford was nearby but neither of us got shot...but we got through, once the machine gun was put out of action.⁷¹⁸

A number of officers, including Beresford, received awards for this engagement, but Torrance was not put forward for an award. When asked why that was so he replied that "I wasn't a chaplain!"⁷¹⁹

In the Army, Torrance tried to keep up his theological activity. In a letter dated September 1990 he observed:

I brought over from Cairo a number of works to study, including Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and Leonard Hodgson on the Doctrine of the Trinity. In Italy I found an old copy of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (to which I had been initiated by Karl Barth), and after Rome fell I borrowed theological books from the College of St Anselm - when Florence fell I bought some works from the Franciscan Publishing House.⁷²⁰ During the Italian Campaign friends of mine asked me to lecture to Army Chaplains at a theological course that took place at Assisi.⁷²¹

Torrance was invited to lecture at Assisi by a fellow Church of Scotland minister, the Rev Ronald Selby Wright, who by that time was the Senior Chaplain with the 10th Indian Division.

At the end of the war, Torrance returned to his parish of Alyth where he finished his thesis and sent it to Basel. Reflecting on his two years' war service with the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation and all that he had experienced during the war, Torrance remarked: "The blood and the slaughter was terrible...unbelievable really."⁷²² When asked whether the War had affected his theological position or his view of the church, he answered that he was "even more convinced now that natural theology is a menace and that you really have to have the

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid. I think what Torrance meant here was that as a member of the Huts and Canteens organisation he was not entitled to receive military awards or decorations such as the M.C. He did however later receive the M.B.E. for his services to the military in Italy during the War. For his services in the action described above, Beresford received the M.C.

⁷²⁰ Torrance retells this story on tape. T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh 23 Feb 1994.

⁷²¹ T.F. Torrance, letter to Fr Dr Jean-Yves Lacoste, Sep 29 1990.

⁷²² T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh 23 Feb 1994.

gospel. For it is only Christ in the centre and a real faith in God that makes any real difference.”⁷²³ Torrance’s Huts and Canteens experience had introduced him to the Church’s social work potential, but it was his belief that this could only have effect, if it were empowered by evangelical faith and good theology.⁷²⁴

Louis Cameron summed up Torrance’s war-time service by noting that “he regarded it as an opportunity of holding up the Cross of Christ to wounded and dying men, letting the light shine through the windows of their souls.”⁷²⁵ Reflecting in 1994 on his war-time experience, Torrance recalled:

I remember after that fierce battle in Italy, in the early dawn I was going around picking up the wounded and I saw a young nineteen year old man, lying on the ground. He was mortally wounded and had not long to live. He said to me “Padre, is God really like Jesus? “ And I said to him, “Oh yes, there is only one God and that is the God who came in Christ to show us his face. And when you see God you will see Jesus.”⁷²⁶

Further, Torrance is also of the opinion that “the liberal tradition has driven a wedge between Jesus and God. To ask what God is like, is the deepest cry of the human heart.” And to give the Christian answer that “God was like Jesus,” was of immense help to the troops.⁷²⁷

While Torrance was working for the Church of Scotland Huts, E.P. Dickie, Professor of Theology at St Andrews, once again got leave of absence from the University and accompanied the troops to Normandy on the D Day landings. He published an account of his time with the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens after July 1944 in his book, Normandy to Nijmegen, published in 1946.⁷²⁸

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ L.L.L. Cameron, A Badge To Be Proud Of, p.91.

⁷²⁶ T.F. Torrance, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 23 Feb 1994.

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ E.P. Dickie, Normandy to Nijmegen, (Edinburgh 1946).

In July 1944 the Church of Scotland Huts were deployed to France as part of a “composite force working with the guidance of Army Welfare Services.”⁷²⁹ It was Dickie’s belief that the chaplains “were stretched beyond their capabilities,”⁷³⁰ and that the ministers serving with the Huts had a worthwhile job to perform:

We set up a pulpit in many strange places - ammo dumps, orchards, trucks, tents and on the bonnets of jeeps. And we were called to give Communion to units on the eve of battle and to many who would not live to receive it again on this earth.⁷³¹

With the chaplains overworked it was not surprising that Church of Scotland ministers serving with the Huts and Canteens should carry on an important spiritual function as well as providing a welcome cup of tea to tired and weary men. In addition Church of Scotland congregations at home sent a vast range of goods to support the troops; everything from “rubber boots, bundles of woolen garments, books, games and magazines to help the soldier in his struggle against the bitterness of the weather and the tedium of such leisure as came to him.”⁷³²

Dickie accompanied the troops who entered Paris, where he was delighted to renew his acquaintance with the Rev Donald Caskie, the minister of the Scots Kirk in Paris, who had decided to remain behind in France after it fell. During the German occupation Caskie worked with the Seamen’s Mission in Marseilles, where he helped allied servicemen to escape back to Britain. An arresting account of Caskie’s work during the war is found in his book, The Tartan Pimpernel.⁷³³ On 22 June 1945 Caskie was recognised for his war-time work by the University of Edinburgh which presented him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Reflecting on the influence the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens towards the end of the war, Dickie wrote:

⁷²⁹ Ibid., p.1.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., p.14.

⁷³¹ Ibid., p.14.

⁷³² Ibid., p.26.

⁷³³ Donald Caskie, The Tartan Pimpernel, (London and Glasgow 1957).

The sphere of operations stretched from Port-en Bessin on the Normandy coast to Nijmegen in Holland, but happily it was the policy of the Church to appoint a highly trained staff, the men often ministers of some years' standing, and the women those who had considerable experience of many different types of welfare work.⁷³⁴

The work of the Church of Scotland clergy in Europe received a slight set back when towards the end of the war, spies had been dropped in the Netherlands, dressed as clergy wearing clerical collars. This resulted in a general routine order being issued, "enacting that chaplains and philanthropic workers should dispense with their clerical collars." In Dickie's opinion this was unfortunate, for the clerical collar was a "professional mark", recognised by all, that made it possible for the minister to speak without embarrassment to anyone from Private soldier to General.⁷³⁵

During World War Two the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens provided a worthwhile service to the troops both at home and overseas and were closely allied in their work with the regular chaplaincy services provided by the military. With the experience of the last war on which to draw the Church of Scotland was quickly organised for operational duty, providing a service that was both practical and spiritually based. The Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens provided the Chaplains' Department with a reserve of experienced ministers, deaconesses and church workers whom they could readily call upon to provide chaplaincy cover and to minister to the troops in areas where it was not possible to station a regular chaplain. Run under the badge of the Church of Scotland, the Huts and Canteens organisation, affectionately known as the "Kirk O Jocks," was a successful war-time institution.

⁷³⁴ Dickie, Normandy to Nijmegen, p.63.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.88.

CASE STUDY 2
THE REV RONALD SELBY WRIGHT
THE RADIO PADRE

Ronald Selby Wright had enlisted as a Territorial Army chaplain prior to the outbreak of the war and was called up with the rest of the 7th/9th Royal Scots in September 1939. He remained with this battalion as their chaplain until June 1941 when he was asked by Dr James Welch, the Director of Religious Broadcasting at the BBC, to become a regular presenter on the radio. At first Selby Wright was reluctant, unsure that he could get his message across on the radio and unwilling to leave the Scottish Division and the Royal Scots in particular. In the end he agreed to broadcast four talks as a trial in November 1941. (These were subsequently published along with some other broadcast talks under the title Let's Ask the Padre⁷³⁶ in 1943.) Such was Selby Wright's popular appeal that in March 1942 he was seconded from the Army to join the staff of the BBC. Selby Wright would eventually attract around 7 million listeners every Wednesday.⁷³⁷

It was another Church of Scotland minister, Melville Dinwiddie, then Director and Controller of BBC Scotland, who introduced Selby Wright to Dr James Welch, who in June 1941 was looking for someone to become the "Radio Padre." A report written by Selby Wright on 30 November 1943 describing his time as the Radio Padre from 1941-43 reveals the constant struggle and mixed feelings he faced leaving behind close friends and colleagues in The Scottish Division, many of whom he had grown up with in the Canongate and St. Giles boys clubs, and the new demands and pressures

⁷³⁶ Ronald Selby Wright, Let's Ask the Padre, (London and Edinburgh 1943).

⁷³⁷ Kenneth M. Wolfe, The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation, 1922-1956. (London SCM, 1984), p.278.

that he faced travelling around the country and broadcasting each week on the radio.⁷³⁸

The first indication that Selby Wright received that the BBC were interested in him as the Radio Padre, was when he received a letter from Welch.⁷³⁹ asking whether or not he would be interested in being seconded to the BBC: “The work for which we should like you to be seconded and for which you would be responsible would be that of developing our religious broadcasting to the men of the forces.”⁷⁴⁰ It was Welch’s belief that the radio gave the church dramatic new ways to spread the gospel to many who would never think about darkening the church door: “This weird and wonderful microphone gives the church a chance of preaching the gospel...it is quite impossible to exaggerate the potentialities for good the Forces broadcasts offer us.”⁷⁴¹

As an Army chaplain, Selby Wright was powerless to accept or refuse the offer to work for the BBC. Approval would have to be sought from the Chaplain General in the first instance and then from the War Office. Selby Wright replied to Welch on 30 June 1941 expressing his personal reservations. He did not want to leave his Scottish battalion and he was doubtful of his own capabilities “to fully realise the tremendous scope of this new appointment.”⁷⁴² However, an approach was to be made to the Chaplain General and the BBC prior to going to the War Office to get official sanction for the appointment.

Welch already had clear ideas as to what the role of the Radio Padre would be and he put these ideas to Selby Wright in a letter written on 3 July 1941. First Welch suggested that the initiative would fail without the help of the Army chaplains working with the units:

⁷³⁸ Ronald Selby Wright, *The Radio Padre, 1941-1943, Report*, contained in the personal papers of Selby Wright now deposited in the National Library of Scotland and here after referred to as the “Selby Wright Letters.”

⁷³⁹ During the War the BBC moved out of London, first to Bristol and then to Bedford.

⁷⁴⁰ J.W. Welch, to Selby Wright, 24 June 1941, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

⁷⁴² R. Selby Wright, to Welch, 30 June 1941, Selby Wright letters.

An approach through the War Office is too remote...It will be very important at the beginning of this new scheme to make personal and direct contact with the Senior Chaplains and, through them, with their chaplains.⁷⁴³

Initially the focus was to be the Ack-Ack sites. Welch recommended that wherever possible the Radio Padre would visit the gun-sites and make outside broadcasts with the men. In addition, Welch felt that the Radio Padre should try to visit four homes of Ack-Ack men a week and “from this actuality background be able to speak to the Ack-Ack men.”⁷⁴⁴ Further it would be the “pastoral job of the Radio Padre to encourage listeners in the Forces to correspondence arising out of his talks.” However, Welch warned, it was important for the Radio Padre always “to avoid poaching on the resident chaplains preserve, and indeed to write to the resident chaplain about men in their units who, through their correspondence, show they are in need of spiritual guidance.”⁷⁴⁵ Such was the quantity of mail sent to the Radio Padre that Selby Wright constantly fought to have a military clerk attached to him full-time. He received between 100 to 1000 letters a day in response to his broadcasts.⁷⁴⁶

On 4 July 1941 Selby Wright wrote to Melville Dinwiddie expressing some of his reservations about the post of Radio Padre. He could envisage a situation where he would lose touch with soldiers and have nothing of any real importance to say to his weekly listeners:

If I have any forte, my friends tell me, it is with men as individuals; impersonally I'm of no use and I'm a rotten committee man. I know they are right and I should hate to lose the individual touch. In fact there is a very real danger that unless I could still keep very actively with fellows the whole purpose would soon be lost...I think there is a very real danger of having a theoretical Radio Padre.⁷⁴⁷

Nevertheless as the BBC and the War Office considered the possibility of appointing Selby Wright, both Welch and Selby Wright were busy thinking their way

⁷⁴³ J.W. Welch, to Selby Wright, 3 July 1941, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid..

⁷⁴⁶ R Selby Wright, *Another Home*, (Edinburgh 1980), p.109.

⁷⁴⁷R. Selby Wright, to Melville Dunwiddie, 4 July 1941, Selby Wright letters.

into the job. Selby Wright was keen to maintain his links with the Scottish Division and always made it clear that once the attachment was over, he wished to return to that Division. At the same time he began to feel that there was more to the Radio Padre's job than simply a ministry on the radio to the Ack-Ack units. He therefore expressed a wish to expand his remit to speak to men in all branches of the Navy, Army and Air Forces. With this in mind he wrote to Welch on 18 July 1941 stating that for this idea to work:

It would be invaluable (if not essential) to be granted the acting rank of 3rd class chaplain [Major] - unpaid, of course. If my work is to carry me into Divisions and Commands, it would complicate things and make them much more difficult if I were to remain a 4th class chaplain [Captain].⁷⁴⁸

This request was not granted.

On 15 September 1941 Welch wrote to Selby Wright expressing some major concerns that the War Office had put to the Chaplain General in regard to Selby Wright being appointed as the Radio Padre. They were anxious that other branches of the army should not be neglected by the Radio Padre at the expense of Ack-Ack men. Further, questions had been raised whether there may be denominational jealousy and troubles if a Church of Scotland minister was appointed, and who ultimately would fund this whole venture.⁷⁴⁹

Welch stated that broadcasting reached all members of the forces and half the civilian population as well. Further he could assure the War Office that there would be no denominational difficulties and that he could produce letters to that effect from the Archbishops of Canterbury, Westminster and the Moderator of the Free Church council to prove his point. Lastly, Welch made the point that "the broadcasts are intended to strengthen the real morale of the troops, their home life and their religion, and that finally, I should regard a collapse of this scheme as a defeat on the spiritual front..."⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁸R. Selby Wright, to J. W. Welch, 18 July 1941, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁴⁹J.W. Welch, to Selby Wright, 15 Sep 1941, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁵⁰Ibid.

Eventually in November 1941 it was agreed that Selby Wright would do four broadcast talks as a trial but with men that he knew from the Scottish Division.⁷⁵¹ In these first broadcasts, Selby Wright used a conversational style, chatting to some soldiers and using their questions and comments as a vehicle for the points he wished to make. On 25 November 1941, however, Welch suggested that as far as the BBC was concerned the focus of the first two talks was too narrow and Selby Wright needed to broaden his vision.⁷⁵²

In early January 1942 Selby Wright wrote to the Chaplain General restating his anxiety about the proposed appointment as the Radio Padre: "My feelings about the proposed appointment is, and always has been [sic], very mixed indeed. I am most unwilling to leave the 52nd Division...it would be a pity to leave them at this stage of the war."⁷⁵³ He concluded with the following P.S.: "...I don't really know how fit I am for an appointment like the one contemplated; I feel that it should really be for an older and more experienced man and one more able in many other ways than I am."⁷⁵⁴ On 27 January, however, Selby Wright informed Welch that, despite his own personal reservations about leaving the Scottish Division, he had come to realise that a "secondment for six months with the BBC would be of even wider importance for the services as a whole."⁷⁵⁵ At the same time, he expressed his disappointment that the three requests he had made for assistance in this pioneering venture, namely, (a.) acting rank, (b.) a batman and (c.) transport facilities, had all been refused.

In a subsequent letter to the Assistant Chaplain General Scottish Command on 29 January 1942, Selby Wright explained his apparent sudden change of mind:

⁷⁵¹ These first four talks were printed in a book by R Selby Wright, Lets Ask The Padre, (London and Edinburgh 1943), pp. 1-35.

⁷⁵² J. W. Welch, to R. Selby Wright, 25 Nov 1941, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁵³ R. Selby Wright, to The Chaplain General, 12 Jan 1942, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ R. Selby Wright, to J.W. Welch, 27 Jan 1942, Selby Wright letters.

I'd rather - much rather - stay on where I am...but there are two things that have weighed with me...that are too important to allow any personal feelings I have to stand in the way:

1. This is a new appointment and a national one and they have asked a Presbyterian from Scotland, who had never given the matter a thought, to do it.

2. The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Free Churches have agreed to my appointment.

About these factors Selby Wright explained:

Now from the point of view of the Church, whose servant I am before the Army's, I feel it my duty to sink personal likes and dislikes and to give it a trial...it will be a lonely and almost friendless job. But even a half-baked Christian like myself knows that there are greater things to be considered than that.⁷⁵⁶

Selby Wright displayed a deep sense of insecurity about leaving the Scottish Division but he also overstated both the personal cost and his own inadequacy to meet the challenge of the Radio Padre appointment. It is only fair to add that Selby Wright was keen to go to war with the men that he knew in the Scottish Division, but equally he needed reassurance from all concerned that he would have their support should the position with the BBC not work out.

It was finally agreed that he would begin his attachment with the BBC on 1 March 1942. A letter from the ACG Scottish Command dated 24 February 1942 confirmed that Army Council permission had been granted for the Rev R.W.V. Selby Wright C.F. to be seconded to the BBC for:

Special religious broadcasting duties. He will therefore be relieved of his ordinary duties as an Army chaplain with effect from 1st March and his services will be at the disposal of the Corporation for a period of six months in the first instance. He will continue to draw Army pay and allowances.⁷⁵⁷

Soon he began touring the Home Forces, starting with Scotland, and regularly broadcast a fifteen minute programme every Wednesday. As he later recalled:

⁷⁵⁶ R. Selby Wright, to ACG Scotland, 29 Jan 1942, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁵⁷ ACG Scotland, to Selby Wright, 24 Feb 1942, Selby Wright letters.

I broadcast from April to the end of September in 1942; rested during the October when to my joy I was appointed Senior Chaplain of my much loved Division - the 52nd Lowland Division - and started broadcasting with Divisional Headquarters as my headquarters again in November; and I broadcast from November 1942 until the end of October 1943.⁷⁵⁸

On 15 September 1942 Selby Wright wrote to the Chaplain General regarding an extension to his original six-month secondment to the BBC:

I am very anxious to get back to active life with soldiers...If it were not that I feel, both by the number of letters I receive and by the BBC listening figures, that in some strange way these talks are meeting a real need, I would ask straight away to stop broadcasting and get right back to the ordinary work of a fighting division...⁷⁵⁹

In October 1942 Selby Wright finally got his long awaited promotion to the Third Class (Major). In writing to congratulate him, Welch expressed his appreciation for all that Selby Wright had achieved in a very few months as the Radio Padre:

I don't think words are adequate to thank you for all you have done, not only for religious broadcasting, but for taking the Christian Faith to the men of the Forces, through the microphone and through your travels. The whole venture has been an astonishing success...⁷⁶⁰

Selby Wright's broadcasts, however, have come in for some criticism. The Rev Jolyon Mitchell, lecturer in Christian Ethics and Practical Theology at The University of Edinburgh, has studied Selby Wright's use of pictorial language and he found it "direct and simple if somewhat patronising." Some contemporaries, such as W.E. Williams,⁷⁶¹ who was a regular wartime contributor to The Listener, were also initially critical of Selby Wright's approach.⁷⁶² Although by mid-1942 Williams was more positive and was impressed by the method of construction used in Wright's talks, his earlier comments were not forgotten. When Selby Wright was asked by an interviewer from the Imperial War Museum what he thought of W.E. Williams, Selby Wright

⁷⁵⁸ R. Selby Wright, The Radio Padre, p.4.

⁷⁵⁹ R. Selby Wright, to The Chaplain General, 15 Sep 1942, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁶⁰ J.W. Welch, to R. Selby Wright, 7 Oct 1942, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁶¹ Kenneth M Wolfe, The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation, 1922-1956, (London 1984), p.279.

⁷⁶² Jolyon Mitchell, Unpublished dissertation, Jan 1997.

dismissed him by saying, "He was one of these cynical people you know. There are quite a lot of them like that."⁷⁶³ This somewhat childish name calling may appear trivial but it reflects Selby Wright's attitude to personal criticism.

One other important role played by the Radio Padre during the War was working for Military Intelligence by sending coded messages to Prisoners of War and allied soldiers overseas. This began when he was appointed Senior Chaplain of the Lowland Division. One day he received a letter marked "TOP SECRET" asking him to go to Aberdeen to meet a Lieutenant Colonel Winterbottom and a Captain Howat who would brief him. They wanted him to continue his broadcasts, but they would edit his scripts and insert a code using key phrases which would be useful to POWs and their agents abroad. When he began his talks with the phrase, "Good Evening Forces," the code would begin and when he said the word, "But," for the first time, the coded message would end. About this covert activity Selby Wright later said:

At first I was very reluctant to do this but on the other hand it was in actual fact an act of mercy...But it nearly drove me mad...First of all I felt in a sense it was dishonourable. I felt that here was something two-faced. I was doing religious talks but they were not only that. Secondly, because it was ruining my talks at the beginning because I had to alter my talks a bit in order to fit in the code...I didn't approve of doing it but on the other hand it wasn't doing any harm to anyone. It was helping prisoners to escape.⁷⁶⁴

Years later Selby Wright was to discover that a fellow Scottish chaplain from Edinburgh, the Rev Stuart Loudon, had heard some of these coded messages on a secret radio that they had in the POW camp in which he was held.⁷⁶⁵

Throughout his life Selby Wright was a prolific writer. During the war he became author of the Scottish Forces Bulletin, a Church of Scotland monthly publication, that was very popular with Scottish chaplains and soldiers. Of this publication he later remarked:

⁷⁶³ R Selby Wright, Taped interview, Imperial War Museum, (Date unknown)

⁷⁶⁴ R. Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

Most of the stuff was pinched from other people. If I saw something in the papers I put it in...Padres liked it as they got stories in it which they could use... It was essentially a Scottish Supplement as distinct from a Radio Padre one.⁷⁶⁶

Many of the Radio Padre broadcasts appeared in print during the war.⁷⁶⁷ But what appears to have made Selby Wright most successful as a broadcaster was his ability to get alongside the people that he met in the forces and to react sensitively to the needs expressed in the letters he received. Reporting on his work as the Radio Padre from 1941-43 he highlighted some talks which evidently met with popular appeal. After the talk on The Difficult Commandment ("I'll be damned if the Beast wins")⁷⁶⁸ he received over 1,000 letters and later disposed of over 14,000 printed copies of the talk. After another talk, Twitterpating,⁷⁶⁹ he received over 800 letters. Elsewhere he began a talk that dealt with infidelity entitled, The Prodigal Son-Or Daughter, by creating a feeling of intimacy: "I think we know each other well enough and understand each other well enough for me to speak out pretty strongly about it."⁷⁷⁰

Interestingly all three of the above talks had to do with sexual and personal relationships between man and woman. They were written by a man who never married and who obviously enjoyed male company, but whose own sexuality remained to his dying day a mystery.

By the early autumn of 1943 Selby Wright had fulfilled his obligations as the Radio Padre and he was to return to Regimental duty. A letter to Selby Wright from Welch, dated 22 September 1943, confirmed that from the War Office's point of view, his weekly talks were no longer essential. This may have been a coded message that his work with Military Intelligence was complete. Welch thanked Selby Wright for all that

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ A selection of RSW's Radio Padre Broadcasts may be found in, The Average Man, (Longmans, London 1942); Lets Ask the Padre, (London and Edinburgh 1943); The Greater Victory, (Longmans, London 1943) and many more.

⁷⁶⁸ This talk can be found in, RSW, The Greater Victory, pp.46-52.

⁷⁶⁹ This talk can be found in, RSW, The Greater Victory, pp.77-83.

⁷⁷⁰ RSW, The Average Man, pp.38-39.

he had accomplished as the Radio Padre saying: “It really has been a triumph of religious broadcasting during one of the most difficult periods of the war.”⁷⁷¹

In November 1943 the Chaplain General issued a warning order that Selby Wright could no longer be retained on his present engagement and that he was intending to post him overseas, where he would be at liberty to make further broadcast talks as conditions allowed.⁷⁷² He was subsequently posted as the Senior Chaplain to the 10th Indian Division and would see service in the Middle East, Cairo, Alexandria and Italy. During this time he managed to make further broadcasts from Jerusalem and Rome. Selby Wright was in Italy with the 10th Indian Division at the end of the war but carried on his work as the Radio Padre until 1947, long after he had returned to the Canongate.

Reflecting on his war-time experiences, he later remarked:

For a very short time it became strange to be quite famous because of all this broadcasting...It seemed that everywhere I went crowds turned up and I met actors and actresses...They were some of the happiest times of my life.⁷⁷³

In November 1943 he wrote that “It is a humbling privilege to have had for so long a time this unique ministry which I have tried my best to do to the greater glory of God.”⁷⁷⁴ A large part of Selby Wright’s success as the Radio Padre stemmed from the fact that he never lost sight of the common man and always regarded his broadcasts as a fire-side chat with a friend. When asked about how he developed his particular style of talking on the radio Selby Wright remarked:

I remember when I first started doing the Radio Padre, Dr Welch put an overcoat on the side of the table and said “you can talk to that.” This is the splendid secret of the whole business because most people when they do a broadcast, shout, especially if they are doing a sermon in church. They forget that on the radio they are talking to somebody intimately. One is just chatting

⁷⁷¹ J.W. Welch, to R. Selby Wright, 22 Sep 1943, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁷² The Chaplain General, to R. Selby Wright, 5 Nov 1943, Selby Wright letters.

⁷⁷³ R Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

⁷⁷⁴ R Selby Wright, Radio Padre 1941-1943, p.5.

to them...People like you to talk to them. They don't like you to pontificate to them.⁷⁷⁵

Perhaps the last word on the Radio Padre should come from his fellow Scottish minister and friend, Melville Dinwiddie, who had originally nominated Selby Wright for the position as The Radio Padre:

Selby Wright's influence was wide and far-reaching, and of great value in bringing the essence of the Gospel to those who longed for comfort and encouragement in anxious days, and to others who felt the need of a working faith in such trying times.⁷⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

The case studies that I have discussed reveal two alternative war-time ministries in which the Church of Scotland excelled. The Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens organisation supported the work of Army chaplains and provided much needed welfare help to soldiers. It was the boast of the Huts and Canteens that during the War they ministered to Scottish troops from Tiree in the Western Isles of Scotland to Tehran in the Persian Gulf.

Inevitably the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens concentrated upon providing support to Kirk members and to Scottish troops in general. But soon it was realised that the need was much greater and the supply of regular chaplains so overstretched, that the Huts and Canteens staff took on a wider and more significant role than anyone ever imagined possible. The Huts were ecumenical places where soldiers could find peace and quiet to write a letter, have a cup of tea or find some spiritual comfort and Christian fellowship. Huts ministers worked as Officiating Chaplains to the Forces, supplementing the work of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. They showed men that the Church cared about them, and they provided the regular chaplains

⁷⁷⁵ R Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

⁷⁷⁶ Melville Dinwiddie, Religion By Radio, (London 1968), p.27.

with a wealth of experienced manpower to plug gaps in their own establishment, and to provide chaplaincy services in areas where no Army chaplains were stationed. Many Huts workers, like E.P. Dickie and Louis Cameron, were veterans of the First World War, while others like T.F. Torrance saw the value of this Church of Scotland organisation and realised that through its services they could make a worthwhile contribution to the war effort. It is also worth noting that the deaconesses, which the Huts employed, brought additional experience and a maternal if not matronly character to Huts and Canteens work, which many soldiers appreciated and which filled a vacuum in the regular chaplaincy provision.

Like the Huts and Canteens work, the role of the Radio Padre proved to be a most valuable form of ministry during the Second World War. The BBC realised the need for a Radio Padre and the potential of religion by radio during the war years. The Chaplains' Department saw that if the right man could be recruited to the position it might help them minister to troops in the more isolated locations both at home and overseas, where chaplains rarely had the opportunity to visit. The appointment of Selby Wright and his subsequent eighteen month secondment to the BBC was to prove to be a great success, especially as he was a serving Army chaplain.

The identity of the Radio Padre was significant. It was important to the troops that the Radio Padre was not simply another minister who broadcast regularly on what they referred to as "The God slot!" The fact that he was a chaplain in uniform, who they could relate to as "The Padre," who went out and met them in their units and who talked to both them and their families at home in a language that they understood, was essential.

Selby Wright had a gift as a communicator. He was at his best in a one to one, personal conversation and he managed to develop this style in his broadcasts. His initial reluctance in accepting the appointment was grounded in the fear that he would lose touch with the common man. He cherished the relationships that he had built up with soldiers of the Scottish division and those whom he had known as boys in his Edinburgh boys clubs. This was a work that he was to return to when he returned to

the Canongate Church after the war. But he was reassured by Dr Welch from the BBC that the aim of the Radio Padre was to strengthen the morale of the troops, to support their families at home and to help them grow in faith.

In January 1942 Selby Wright was eventually persuaded that this was not only a worthwhile appointment but that as far as he was concerned it was one of national importance and that he, as a Church of Scotland chaplain, was being asked to take on this role. He was also encouraged that the other main denominational leaders in Britain had agreed to his appointment.

Little did Selby Wright know that in time he would be asked to work for military intelligence through his broadcasts, nor did he realise how much popular appeal and correspondence the Radio Padre would receive. In the broadcasts he spoke about peoples fears and concerns: "I dealt with life and all facets of life and the worries people have, perhaps peoples' deaths and disloyalty at home and this sort of thing."⁷⁷⁷ And yet his listening audience stretched far beyond Scotland or the soldier in uniform. The Radio Padre received a great number letters from a wide variety of people. On reflection Selby Wright commented "there was a schoolboy at Wellington and there was the tough soldiers and there was the parents at home and they all seem to at that time listen."⁷⁷⁸

The success of the Radio Padre during the Second World War was heralded by the BBC as a "Triumph of Religious Broadcasting." It was a personal triumph for the Rev Ronald Selby Wright and his ministry by radio. It was a triumph for the Church of Scotland that a Kirk minister was asked to represent the Church in Britain in this way. And finally, it was a triumph for the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, by allowing one of its chaplains leave of absence for 18 months to be seconded to the BBC, on full pay, as "The Radio Padre."

⁷⁷⁷ R Selby Wright, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 28 Oct 1993.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEMOBILISATION

Long before the fighting stopped people in both the Church and in the Military were comparing the experience of World War Two with that of the Great War and beginning to draw out lessons learnt which in time would shape military chaplaincy for the future. Compared to World War One chaplains were recruited after 1939 for the duration of the war rather than given a temporary or emergency commission for a few months. After 1945 it was decided that a permanent cadre of regular chaplains would be required to serve alongside the Army and that a sizable TA and Reserve corps of chaplains had to be maintained. Numerically the Chaplains' Department established the need to retain one chaplain for every 1100 men and this proportional factor, based on denominational preference of recruits and the manpower targets at the time of recruitment, has been retained to the present day.

Important lessons were learnt in regard to chaplaincy training during World War Two. The benefit of a trained rather than an untrained chaplain on the field of battle was generally realized. The RACHD constantly endeavoured to refine its training package both at Chester and at Tidworth and in 1946 the RACHD Depot and training centre was opened at Bagshot Park in Surrey, where it remained until the Department's bicentenary year in 1996 when Bagshot Park returned to the Crown Estates and the RACHD Depot moved to temporary accommodation at Netheravon House prior to moving eventually into a purpose built, Tri Service, Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at Amport House in Hampshire.

Wartime service also brought many chaplains into an ecumenical environment for the first time. These were still early days in the ecumenical process and some chaplains had personal difficulties sharing an altar with another minister or priest from a different tradition. Questions were raised as to where authority and direction lay in the RACHD. How far, for example, was the Army Chaplain to accept military discipline and authority over and above his ecclesiastical position? Needless to say the

demands of war blurred many hard line attitudes towards religion. The chaplain had to serve the religious and the non-religious alike. Even in the POW camps chaplains would argue and debate the rights and wrongs of their own religious background and tradition. But to the majority of the troops these were academic questions that bore no real relevance or impact upon ministry on operations.

Both during and after World War Two the Roman Catholic chaplains determined to retain their independent structure separate from the rest of the Department. Today as the RACHD looks towards the next millennium it is recognized that for operational purposes at least all chaplains, including the Roman Catholic's, should be deployed and responsible to the Force Senior Chaplain regardless of denomination.

But perhaps the most lasting legacy and lesson that could be drawn from military chaplaincy during World War Two was the high regard and respect that many men felt for their chaplains. It is hard today to find much open criticism of Second World War chaplains and the fact that in this war they were afforded greater freedom of movement than their First World War predecessors, and had the ability to serve as far forward as was operationally possible helped their cause. Since the end of World War Two subsequent Strategic Defence Reviews have acknowledged the work and worth of military chaplaincy and the need to retain a strong and well trained RACHD. Since World War Two chaplains have served in Korea and in Aden, and in more recent years Scottish chaplains served in the Falklands War 1982, the Gulf War 1991 and today continue to serve in some strength in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and any other operational theatre where British Troops are deployed..

At the 111th meeting of the British War Cabinet held on 4 August 1943 it was decided, inter alia, to appoint a committee to carry out a general survey of demobilisation plans. The two remaining operational requirements were: to continue the war against Japan and to police occupied enemy territory.⁷⁷⁹ In the ensuing discussion the position of all servicemen and women, including chaplains, was

⁷⁷⁹ War Office Papers, Army Council Secretariat, Minute 70A, 9 Aug 1943, PRO/ WO\3212244.

considered. It was decided that a “Demobilisation Committee” should be appointed and this in turn held its first meeting on 18 August 1943.

On 23 August 1943 the Rev P.D. Thomson, the Joint Convener of the Church of Scotland Committee on Church and National Service, informed the senior Scottish Churchman, John White, that:

I agree that we ought to be exercising our minds now on the question how best to approach the young men and women of our parishes and congregations on their return [from military service]...memoranda may be obtained from some of our more experienced chaplains...I would expect our chaplains themselves, on their return, to be the men best qualified to give the whole church a lead in this matter.⁷⁸⁰

It should he argued, be the concern of both the Army and the Church that the bitter experience of demobilisation after the 1914-18 War not be repeated: Thomson continued:

I regard it as a scandal no less to the Church than to the State, that after the last war, so many of our lads, both officers and men, had to trudge the streets looking for jobs and finding none, or hawking wares in a hopeless effort to keep families and themselves from starving.⁷⁸¹

As 1944 dawned White was already making plans for the post-war period. In the Presbytery of Glasgow he spoke of the challenge that faced the Church when the fighting stopped: “In many ways it will be a new world” he said. After five years of “fierce and inhuman strife,” the Church of Scotland must prepare for action in the post-war period.⁷⁸² White was convinced that the Church had a very real duty to look after returning servicemen and women:

It might seem a little premature to talk about this before the War has been won, but we must think about it - we must guide ministers, office bearers, congregations in welcoming them back to their homes...We all know what happened at the close of the last war. Many of our young folks were shamefully

⁷⁸⁰ P.D Thomson to John White, 23 Aug 1943, John White Papers, Box 21.7.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸² Augustus Muir, John White, (London 1958), p.392.

neglected...we in the Church must see to it that this does not happen again...The task is a parochial one, and will call for a great pastoral effort.⁷⁸³

In May 1944 John White drew the attention of the Assembly to the scale of the problem that would face the Church following demobilisation. He reported that the Committee on Church and National Service (of which White was Convener) had already begun to consider the question of demobilisation and had concluded that “the Church’s care must be a real thing from the beginning of the demobilisation period.”⁷⁸⁴ The Committee urged Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to begin immediately to consider the scale of the problem and to lay plans for the return of war veterans and war workers. One particular problem envisaged was that a number of the marriages contracted under war-time conditions had been subjected to severe strain over the war years, and there was likely to be a great deal of pastoral work needed to bring together families that had been separated for some considerable time.

The Church was all too aware of the pressures that families had been under during the war, not least those families which had suffered bereavement or separation due to a family member being held as a POW. The Church also felt a responsibility to make the Christian faith relevant to returning servicemen and women for it was the experience of many Scottish chaplains that there was little open hostility towards religion amongst the men and women in the forces. It was the contention of the Church and National Service Committee at the 1944 Assembly that: “War does not necessarily lead to a religious awakening, but the terrible experiences undergone by men and women do create serious stirrings in their minds which may well dispose them towards religion.”⁷⁸⁵

The end of hostilities did not immediately erase the memory of all that had happened during the war years. Some found that the experience of war had hardened their hearts against religious belief; others felt that it had deepened their faith. The Rev Stuart Loudon, the minister of the Church of Scotland captured at Tobruk, was to

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ Reports, May 1944, p.554.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 555.

write: "I must say that I am thankful that, as a prisoner of war, I learnt the meaning and power of a sound religion."⁷⁸⁶ It was Louden's experience that only Christian Faith could turn all the anxiety, trouble and sorrow associated with warfare into a creative experience.

David Cairns, another Church of Scotland chaplain, felt that it would not be easy in the post-war years to forgive or forget the experiences of war. He wrote:

All that memory flooded in upon my mind as I stood in a field in the February mud at Pfalzdorf by the raw graves we had dug for the five German soldiers killed there the day before. For one of these men came from that very district... Today we were burying him, shot through the heart... I don't know what kind of man he had been, evil or good. Today his spirit may be walking in darkness, or in light... That was what Germany did to her own sons: poisoned their souls and then destroyed their bodies, after using them to kill and to injure millions of innocent men and women of other nations... I have only enlarged at such length on that one experience and memory because I feel it was symbolic of something universal - that element in our life which makes us cynical about any great betterment in human affairs. I have seen it in the soldiers who say, "Things will be no better after the war than they were last time." And, in fact, though I know such an attitude is wrong, there is only too much evidence in the world to support it. We are passing from war into a peace where ruin stares at a whole continent.⁷⁸⁷

It was the considered opinion of other Scottish chaplains, including the Rev David H.C. Read, a long-time POW, that the Christian Church had a very real and important role to play, not only in rehabilitating individual war veterans, but also in helping to change the mentality of the nation:

We know that when you have trained millions in the arts of war, and have taught them the modern science of destruction, you can't transform their outlook overnight. When you replace the beret by the bowler, you don't automatically change the mentality underneath... It's no use having plans and instruments or reconstruction so long as our mental outlook remains destructive... Our task, then, is to build up a positive mentality. At present we are weighted down with negative thoughts... The Christian message is positive, not negative.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁶ Alexander Gemmell, ed. New Voices in the Scottish Pulpit, Sermons by the Younger Ministers of the Church of Scotland, (London 1946/47), p. 63.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.131.

The question of demobilisation and the enormity of the task that lay before the Church of Scotland focused the attention of many during the latter part of 1944. On 11 January 1945, John White produced a draft memorandum on the “Return of Men and Women from War Service,” in which he urged the whole Church to recognise that demobilisation concerned not simply the armed forces of the Crown but also the immense number of people who had been drawn into national service such as civil defence and war industries.⁷⁸⁹ As far as the chaplains were concerned some had parishes to return to, while others who had demitted their charges during the War now had to decide whether to look for a vacant congregation or to continue their Army service.

By early 1945 the discussion on demobilisation was gathering pace. On 17 February 1945 the Chaplain General attended a meeting with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York along with representatives of all three services to address the issue of demobilisation. At this meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury pressed for an agreement whereby the Churches, subject to Government sanction, should decide the order of release of chaplains so as best to secure equity between the needs of the military and the shortage of clergy in the parishes. This request was forcibly rejected by the government representatives.⁷⁹⁰ Following this meeting the Chaplain General issued a letter to all Army chaplains stating that:

Chaplains will be released *pari passu* with all others in age and service group. There is of military necessity a retention clause, but it is our intention to operate this on the same principle as in any other Army service.⁷⁹¹

It was therefore made clear to all concerned that chaplains would be demobilised in the same way and at the same time as all other serving officers. There was to be no preferential treatment for demobilising clergy.

⁷⁸⁹ J. White, Draft Memorandum, 11 Jan 1945, John White Papers, Box 22.1.

⁷⁹⁰ War Office Papers, Note by the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Defence, 17 Feb 1945. PRO WO\32\11596.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Letter from Chaplain General to all Chaplains.

In June 1945 the General Assembly authorized the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces to make full use of money in their charge to provide an allowance to demobilised chaplains, who had not yet found a vacant charge.⁷⁹² On 27 June 1945 the Presbytery of St. Andrews brought an overture to the Assembly relative to the impending "Release and Term of Service of Chaplains."⁷⁹³ This overture made the case that congregations "have long had their spiritual vitality gravely impaired by the long continued absence of their ministers,"⁷⁹⁴ and therefore asked the Assembly to make representation to H.M. Government stating the urgency of securing the speedy release of all ministers. The motion was carried by 65 votes to 61.

The loud cries from congregations to have their ministers released from military service as early as possible did little to sway the military or government authorities. The military imperative was all important and chaplains had to wait their turn to be demobilised like everyone else. In many areas senior chaplains were busy trying to persuade at least some of their chaplains to continue their service with the Royal Army Chaplains' Department into the post-war years, but for the majority thoughts focused only on a return to Scotland and the civilian ministry. The War was now over. Yet it would be some time before all the Scottish chaplains were demobilised, not least because chaplaincy cover still had to be provided for the Army of occupation. On Sunday 2 September 1945 the Rev Ronnie Falconer, the Regional Assistant for BBC Scotland, made a radio broadcast:

Today, we have emerged again into what we call peace...uneasy, bewildering peace it may be, but at least a chance for the nations to profit from the blood and tragedy of these last years of war.⁷⁹⁵

The Rev Tommy Nicol was eventually demobilised in 1946. But after three years he applied to re-join the RACHD, eventually becoming the Assistant Chaplain

⁷⁹² Minutes of the Committee on Chaplains to H.M. Forces, p.640.

⁷⁹³ Reports 1945, p.641.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ A. Gemmell (ed), New Voices in the Scottish Pulpit, p.104.

General Scottish Command prior to leaving the Army to go to Crathie Church and become the Queen's Domestic Chaplain at Balmoral.

On reflection Nicol felt that his war-time experience had changed his view of the Church. "I began to see "THE CHURCH", in capital letters, as not just the Church of Scotland. When I look back on it I had had a very narrow upbringing in the Old Kirk...but the war showed me that the Church of Scotland had a much more catholic view of the Church than the Anglicans."⁷⁹⁶ When asked if the experience of war had changed him as a person, Nicol replied: "After the war it took me a long time to unwind...I don't think the war changed me. It formed me...They were fulfilled days."⁷⁹⁷

There was a necessary development of ecumenism amongst chaplains during the Second World War. Despite the fact that the Church of England sponsored the largest number of Army Chaplains and the RACHD training school was mostly run on Anglican lines, wartime chaplains quickly realised that the majority of soldiers were not interested in denominational differences but looked for a chaplain who offered them a sympathetic ear and who spoke a simple message, in a language that they could understand. Inevitably, it was the chaplains themselves who had most problem coming to terms with one another's religious tradition. The most successful chaplains were those who could accept another man's point of view or training and was prepared to move forward together. When Tommy Nicol landed on the Normandy beaches he agreed with his Roman Catholic colleague to divide the battlefield between them. The minister took the right flank while the priest took the left flank with the understanding that absolution would be universal.

In 1943 the Utttoxeter area of England was the base for a large concentration of American troops. All the local churches, from the Roman Catholic to the Society of Friends, published a bulletin that extended an ecumenical welcome to the servicemen. "The Christian Churches in this area welcome you warmly among them ... It is our

⁷⁹⁶ T.J.T. Nicol, Taped interview, Comrie, 17 Dec 1993.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

wish to be of any service or help that we can.”⁷⁹⁸ That too was the desire of many chaplains, but most were young and inexperienced and for their own security tended to adhere rigidly to their denominational roots. In some areas not nearly enough use was made of mission, and chaplaincy training, both during the war and since, has not adequately addressed this important question as to how best to minister in the ecumenical setting that army service offers.

The Rev George Monro was serving with the Royal Scots when the war ended. Earlier he had been wounded in the left arm and in the lower face. After medical treatment in Britain and a period of convalescence, he returned to the front line. He eventually returned to the 15th Scottish Division where he replaced Ian Dunlop who himself had been wounded on 16 February 1945. After medical treatment Dunlop was declared fit enough to return to the 15th Scottish and Monro was posted as chaplain to the Royal Scots. After the War Monro returned to his parish in Edinburgh. About his war service Monro, with humility, later recalled: “It was just a job to be done....”⁷⁹⁹

The Rev Ian Dunlop had resigned from his parish in Argyll in 1942 to join the Royal Army Chaplains’ Department. He saw the end of the war in Lubeck as the Senior Chaplain of the 15th Scottish Division. In February 1945 he had been shot in the leg during a night attack, where, he claimed, “by accident” he had been too far forward.⁸⁰⁰ The injury was not too serious and he was able, after medical treatment in theatre, to return to the front line.

Dunlop, however, was not demobilised until 3 October 1946. Until his release, as Senior Chaplain he had to write a monthly report for his superiors in the Chaplains’ Department detailing the situation in his Divisional area in Germany, and also describing the provision of chaplaincy cover. In December 1945 he reported: “The area is large and the deficiency of chaplains and the interruption of leave mean that spiritual

⁷⁹⁸ T, Harrison, Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex, File Report FR 1870A, June 1943, p.15.

⁷⁹⁹ G.D. Monro, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

⁸⁰⁰ A.I. Dunlop, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 27 Oct 1993.

service cannot be as satisfactorily performed as heretofore.”⁸⁰¹ The problem of chaplaincy cover, however, was eased by the assistance of “two ministers of the Church of Scotland Canteens...and Mr Smith of the Church Army in Lubeck.”⁸⁰² As the Senior Chaplain Dunlop was responsible for all chaplains and denominations (except Roman Catholics) in the Divisional Area.

In his December report Dunlop also remarked that some chaplains had become “a little tired and somewhat depressed at the decreasing church attendance as a result of the Commander in Chief’s letter.”⁸⁰³ (It appears that the Commander in Chief decided that church attendance was no longer to be compulsory.) In a subsequent report in January 1946 Dunlop followed up his point about poor church attendance:

My chief criticism of the present arrangement is that it makes church attendance too much a conscious act for most men...rather than a good habit acquired. There is no doubt that the number of men with whom the Padre can have contact or communication is much smaller than before...The men are thinking chiefly about getting home, and now that the fear of battle has departed, it is hard to get men to go to church voluntarily.⁸⁰⁴

Dunlop wrote his final report for the Army in September 1946 as the Senior Chaplain British Troops in the Low Countries. Looking forward to his own demobilisation date of 3 October 1946, he took this last opportunity to speak about the post-war Army’s view of religion:

In the Army now, I fear, religion has become an affair for the zealous, and the zealous are attending well...I am not pessimistic about the long term position of religion in the life of the Army. More settled conditions, when a good chaplain can live with the troops and be known by them will allow for the formation of the leavening fellowship of the Church in Battalions and Regiments...If church service is to be entirely voluntary, the burden laid upon the chaplain...and his work will be more like a missionary than a parish minister...officers as a whole are not playing their part, by example or in administration, in encouraging their men in the worship of God.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰¹ A.I. Dunlop, 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division, Senior Chaplain’s Report for December 1945.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ A.I. Dunlop, 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division, Senior Chaplain’s Report for January 1946.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., Report for September 1946.

Dunlop's war-time experience had convinced him that a good chaplain could have a profound influence upon the men of a battalion especially when he was given support by the officers. He believed that compulsory church parades had developed a level of faith and understanding amongst all ranks that was sadly lacking in the post-war years. After demobilisation Dunlop became the Assistant Minister at St. Columba's, Church of Scotland Church, Pont Street, in London, and later became minister of St Stephen's Edinburgh. When asked over fifty years later whether he still thought about his experiences as a Scottish chaplain during the Second World War he replied: "You can't avoid thinking about it...It was merely a case of keeping your head down...Today I feel no bitterness, it had to be done."⁸⁰⁶

The Rev J.K.S. Reid had left his parish of Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh, in the capable hands of Professor Burleigh of New College when he enlisted as a chaplain in 1942. He was in Alexandria when the war finished, serving with the Parachute Regiment, and on return to his parish he became chaplain to the Scottish Territorial Army Parachute Battalion. When asked in 1994 whether he still thought about his war-time service, Professor Reid, sighed and said: "I suppose it was such a deep, prolonged and profound experience that it is always in the back of one's mind and it is something to which one continually returns."⁸⁰⁷ Reid did not think that the war had altered his theological position as he had had plenty of time to determine this before he enlisted as an Army chaplain. Yet he did feel that the war had a "broadening" effect upon him.

Professor Robert Craig, who became Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1986, had served as an Army chaplain from 1943-47. While devoting his life to an academic career, Craig felt that in the Army he learnt more about human nature than he ever did in a university:

I still think about it, but you tend to forget the unpleasant things...the Normandy landings or being under mortar fire...But what I remember most is the meeting of basic human need and sharing with other people, something I

⁸⁰⁶ A.I. Dunlop, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 27 Oct 1993.

⁸⁰⁷ J.K.S. Reid, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 3 Mar 1994.

have not known since...I have never known a fellowship quite the same. Even George MacLeod, despite being a pacifist and formerly an Adjutant with the Argyll's during the First World War, would often say that the War was not only the most formative of his years, but the most productive and in some sense the happiest. We had a common cause.⁸⁰⁸

One of the more positive aspects of phased demobilisation was that when older and more experienced chaplains left the Army, younger men were promoted. One Scottish chaplain who benefited from promotion in the immediate post-war years was the Rev Hamish McIntosh. He had joined the RChD in 1943 and continued to serve until July 1947 when he was demobilised and became chaplain at Glasgow University. McIntosh had been wounded in the ankle by shrapnel during an air-raid in late October 1944. After a period of convalescence and rest at home back in Britain he recovered sufficiently to resume his military service but could no longer serve overseas.

He was posted to number one military port at Faslane on the West coast of Scotland. Here, in March 1945 he received notification that he had been awarded an M.C. for his previous military service. Towards the end of the war he was promoted and posted to Glasgow as the Senior Chaplain Glasgow Sub-District.

The wearing of rank and the opportunity, (even expectation), of promotion caused difficulties and created barriers for some chaplains. All ministers to the Forces were volunteers, the majority of them having joined for the duration of the war only, and many maintained some sort of contact with the parishes they left. For some the wearing of military rank meant little compared to the ecclesiastical rank that they had earned in their civilian life. A survey on Chaplaincy in the Forces dated June 1943 points out that "a chaplain will assume the relative rank of Captain on joining up. On promotion to divisional work, he will become a Senior Chaplain to the Forces (S.C.F.) with a rank equivalent to that of Major. The ranks move up in a normal way and the Chaplain General has the relative rank of Major General."⁸⁰⁹ This survey then goes on to demonstrate that the wearing of military rank is one of the main barriers to the

⁸⁰⁸ R. Craig, Taped interview, Falkland, 6 July 1994.

⁸⁰⁹ T. Harrison, [Mass Observation Archive](#), University of Sussex, File report FR 1870A, June 1943, p.2.

successful integration of the chaplain into the unit and a key weakness in military chaplaincy. The author of the Mass Observation Survey does however show that there are many other factors which hinder the work and worth of the chaplains, not least of all the significance of the relationship between the CO and the padre and the lack of support and training given to the chaplain by the RChD.

Compared to his civilian counterpart the chaplain wears rank and can demand an audience with the troops. Compulsory Church parades give him an automatic right of access to the soldiers but this placed a heavy responsibility on the chaplain to set the right tone in the service. Many chaplains were criticized for being too academic, too theological and for using pious language that few men understood. In the Forces one found an extraordinary cross section of men; "it is still genuinely true," remarks the author of the Mass Observation Survey, "that bankers and bargees, clothiers and coalmen find themselves working side by side."⁸¹⁰ But the worst and most frequent criticism leveled at the chaplains was an aloofness and the lack of initiative they showed to get alongside the men. In addition many were accused of hiding behind their badges of rank. They were generally considered to lack the common touch but then again "they are clergymen not men."⁸¹¹ It was believed by some COs that the Church in the Forces had little enough to offer except direct spiritual aid. Attitudes however changed on operations and chaplains were increasingly asked to prove themselves. Those who were up to the mark found it to be a rewarding experience. As one correspondent to the Mass Observation survey with twenty eight years service remarked:

I have enjoyed sympathetic support from high combatant officers... I found uniform and badges of rank acceptable to all ranks as a symbol of the brotherly spirit without which priests are useless in the Army... I found the Army a school of brotherhood, secured by a mutual respect which discipline always requires, and in this aspect a fair parable of what the Church of God might try to be.⁸¹²

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., p.9.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., p.21.

⁸¹² Ibid., p.12.

It was not easy being a military chaplain in wartime. It was crucial for the padre to create his own identity and to identify with the men he was there to serve. It was expected that he should show, not merely by what he said but also by the way he said it, that he does have something in common with the men he is speaking to. But as one chaplain with First World War experience pointed out, “the Army’s chief interest in the RACHD is an interest in morale...I was useful to the Brigade, I became a sort of mascot, I was good for morale. Anyway only the exceptional padre can get away from his three pips.”⁸¹³ Many chaplains soon discovered that the real job of the padre starts where his official duties finish.

It was Hamish McIntosh’s chaplaincy experience that if any minister is to be successful in his calling, “it is the total impression of your witness that counts.”⁸¹⁴

When asked to reflect upon his war-time days he observed:

I grew up in the Army...It was extremely good for me. My father had died when I was a boy and I had no brothers and sisters and I had always lived at home, even at University. But it was good for me to mix with men and those who were not church people...It broadened my experience and stimulated my thinking...I have no regrets about it...The months on active service were very happy ones, despite the losses...[in the height of the fighting] we were working in the Regimental Aid Post, helping the Doctor, constantly busy for 14 hours at a time. And at the end of it I had a feeling of ecstasy, as if for a period I had forgotten myself completely....⁸¹⁵

The Rev Fraser McLuskey had a remarkable war-time career as a chaplain with the Special Air Service (SAS).⁸¹⁶ Late in the autumn of 1944 he returned from France and to his family but he was anxious to get back to the regiment. Because of the unusual life he had led with the SAS in France, he found it very difficult to settle. He

⁸¹³ Ibid., p.14.

⁸¹⁴ H. McIntosh, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 17 Mar 1994.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ J.F. McLuskey, has written about his war-time life in *Parachute Padre*, (Spa Books 1985) and in an autobiography entitled *The Cloud and The Fire*, (Pentland Press 1993).

was to return to the SAS in Belgium and advanced with them through Holland and into Germany, eventually ending up in Kiel when the war ended.

Before he was demobilised in the autumn of 1946 McLuskey managed to visit the families of SAS men who had been killed during the war. McLuskey felt that his faith had grown as a result of his experiences:

I discovered that what matters in life is a personal faith and commitment in an orthodox evangelical sense...Personally speaking, my time in France with the SAS, both deepened and strengthened my own reliance on Our Lord and on the power and reality of prayer.⁸¹⁷

Finally, he said that his connection as chaplain with the SAS and the Regimental Association had been for him “a very important part of my being. Perhaps in some ways the most important part.”⁸¹⁸

Not all Scottish chaplains felt called to return to their civilian ministry; some decided after the war to continue their service in the Army and to make a career in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. Two such men were the Rev David Henderson, who had come originally from the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Rev David Whiteford of the Church of Scotland. Both these veterans of the Second World War ended their service successively as Deputy Chaplain General.

David Henderson believed that it was the chaplains' responsibility to understand the nature of the men they were dealing with in the armed forces. The chaplain could not expect the men all to be angels, but the men did expect the chaplain to be above repute. Henderson firmly believed that the good chaplains he met in his long Army career were the ones who felt they had a definite calling to this particular type of ministry.

In the Army you had to deal with some hard-bitten men,[especially in the post-war years], many of whom knew little or nothing about the church...In the

⁸¹⁷ J.F. McLuskey, Taped interview, Edinburgh, 15 Sep 1993.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

Army I began to think that denominations do not matter, but what the soldiers looked for was the man behind the collar.⁸¹⁹

Soldiers took a whole range of problems to their chaplains. According to the Mass Observation Survey “the padre is naturally granted far more facilities than other officers for meeting all ranks on a fairly equal footing.”⁸²⁰ It was a great advantage to the chaplain that he could, if he wanted, transcend the rank structure. The very fact that the General and the youngest soldier could call him “Padre” cut across many artificial barriers. His role was to strengthen the morale of the troops and to provide religious instruction to them. He was to many a link with home and with eternity. In many ways the chaplain had to be all things to all men, caring alike for the religious and the non-religious. The Presbyterian style of worship, as traditionally offered by Church of Scotland chaplains, suited the war-time conditions. A Presbyterian liturgy that was not primarily sacramental was acceptable by many of those who were unfamiliar or estranged from organized religion. Compulsory Church parades, Padres’ Hours and the daily presence of the padre in the unit helped to form close relationships between the chaplains and the men and created a foundation not just for the present but equally for the future and the post-war Church.

In the Forces there is a more realistic and earthly attitude taken towards religious matters - the essentials are far more directly considered and the frills ignored. As a private soldier in the medical corps was to write from the Middle East in June 1943:

Life is what you make it. It has been shorn of all its artificial superlatives, and you get to looking at your own existence in a different light. For the first time perhaps, you really get to know yourself, and what you are worth. It is difficult to explain this feeling that comes over you, but all of us who have been up there have experienced it at some time or other. You get a different feeling towards things in general. Your perspective has been changed, as has your sense of values. You realize the pettiness of so many things that you once thought important, and the importance of so many that you previously took for granted.

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⁸¹⁹ D. Henderson, Taped interview, GlenIsla, 7 July 1994.

⁸²⁰ Mass Observation Survey, p.3.

⁸²¹ Mass Observation Survey, p.10.

The chaplain was one of the few people to whom the soldier could take his problems and his fears. Many padres discovered that the men welcomed opportunities to talk to him outside the officially recognized channels. To exercise a ministry of presence in the NAAFI, the cookhouse or on the sports field often produced unexpected opportunities to talk to soldiers and for them to share their problems. Good chaplains were known to be approachable and friendly without being too familiar. They were men with whom you could talk about anything. Good chaplains were men who had earned, rather than expected, the trust and respect of the soldiers. They were men of integrity who worked on the soldiers behalf and were prepared, when necessary, to act as a go-between and to represent the soldiers view. In this instance the chaplains rank could carry a certain amount of negotiable currency. Rarely would servicemen criticize the chaplain for being amongst the good and the godly, but soldiers were quick to criticized the chaplain who was elusive, evasive, didn't really listen, didn't try to understand, or who failed to follow up a soldiers request for help.

The chaplain like no other person in the unit can demonstrate to the soldier that he is cared about and that all men are worthy. On the field of battle some chaplains risked their own lives to find the wounded and to bury the dead as a mark of respect and as a tangible demonstration of a soldiers worth and sacrifice. At other times soldiers and officers wrestled with the ultimate nature of their job, namely that of fighting, and had a strong feeling of insecurity. Sometimes, "fear, loneliness, a glimpse of the infinite or a real re-assessment of values makes man feel his own unimportance,"⁸²² On such occasions only the chaplain can properly begin to address these issues.

When asked what makes a good chaplain, David Henderson replied:

⁸²² Ibid., p.30.

Someone who has an awful lot of sympathy to understand the nature of the beast that you are dealing with. Not so much to be critical of him but to appreciate what he is for the points that he has.⁸²³

During his war-time service Henderson said he met some chaplains who were very good, but others whom he believed “just slithered along!”⁸²⁴ Henderson served for over 28 years as an Army chaplain, and reflecting on his time he concluded that “I would go again if I could.”⁸²⁵

On the night that hostilities ceased in North-west Europe in May 1945, the Rev David Whiteford, chaplain to the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, preached at a Memorial Service before the men of the Scots and Welsh Battle Group of the Guards Armoured Division. He took as his text John 12:24: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”⁸²⁶ The theme was Sacrifice and the fruits that this can bear. Whiteford began his sermon by describing how he heard news of the surrender:

I was shaving when the news reached me. My driver put his head round the door. “They’ve packed in, Padre. We’ve had the war!” He said it with as much enthusiasm as a man trying to sell bad fish to a customer he knew wouldn’t buy. I finished shaving. Strange, when you come to think of it, that the one moment we have all been longing for, fighting for, praying for, sometimes thinking it would never happen, sometimes doubting if we would ever see it, should be ushered in without trumpets or pageantry, and accepted almost as part of the hazardous routine that is our battle life, where the unexpected is received hourly without comment and the unforeseen without alarm...What the future holds for us we do not know. Our concern in this sermon is not with the future, however, but with the past.⁸²⁷

As this Church of Scotland chaplain knew only too well from personal experience, the cost of war in human terms was meaningless if someone could not put a price on the sacrifice of the many. For Whiteford that someone had to be the

⁸²³ D. Henderson, Taped interview, GlenIsla, 7 July 1994.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ The full text of this sermon may be found in A. Gemmell (ed.), New Voices in the Scottish Pulpit, pp. 80-84.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., p.80.

Regimental Padre. In the sermon he preached on the night of the ending of war in North West Europe, Padre Whiteford defined the word "Sacrifice" in these terms:

If you should ask me for a title to this chapter we have written, I would give you, as a key, the word "Sacrifice." For it is no less than a record of duty done to the point of sacrifice, hourly, daily, consistently, tirelessly, heedlessly. Sacrifice of health and limb and life. For months now it has been the stuff and inevitable substance of our life. Like a face of black rock shot with fissures of gold. Like a shaft of bright moonlight tracing a pattern on dark waters. The word "sacrifice," the key to the whole intense problem, making it both bearable and understandable.⁸²⁸

Like many other Scottish chaplains, Whiteford had often stood at a field funeral and driven a little cross into the top of a freshly-dug grave. He had come away from these experiences believing that if there had been no cross and no sacrifice by Jesus Christ, then the many deaths would have been meaningless.

At a final Memorial Service in Germany Whiteford asked the Commanding Officers of the regiments gathered before him to read the names of the fallen. A Scots piper played a lament and a bugler from the Welsh Guards sounded the Reveille: "It was the most moving experience in my whole ministry,"⁸²⁹ declared Whiteford. "It was a long, sad, glorious roll. These men were our brothers in arms. Without their valour there could have been no victory...Their memorial is a solitary cross of wood, a grave in a foreign soil tended by friendly yet alien hands."⁸³⁰

This poignant valediction forms an appropriate ending to this study of the role of the Scottish Padre in the Second World War.

⁸²⁸ D.H. Whiteford, Sermon, *New Voices in the Scottish Pulpit*, (ed.) A. Gemmell, p.82.

⁸²⁹ D. H. Whiteford, Taped interview, Gillan, 29 Oct 1993.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.84.

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