

Religion and Chaplaincy on the Western Front 1914-1918

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1.a. A Christian world at war

- Christianity and war (peace versus pacifism')
- Thomas of Aquin, 'bellum iustum' and patriotism as Christian virtue
- Theilhard de Chardin, 'La Nostalgie du front', war as a transcendent experience
- Catholicism (ambiguous attitude)
- Benedict XV, Ludendorff: 'Französischer papst', Clemenceau, 'Pape boché'
- Belgian-catholic resistance and patriotism (Cardinal Mercier) versus Flemish-catholic movement and pacifism
- Anglicanism (state church)
- Bishop of London: 'It is a Holy War, and to fight in a Holy War is an honour'
- French priest Duroy: "To fall for one's country is not to die: it is to take eternal life by assault"
- Protestantism ('Gott mit uns': war as result of divine providence)

1.b. Impact of WW1 on religion

- Secularization (God versus horrors of war)
- Link between nationalism and religion remained
- Belgian versus Flemish Catholics
- More ecumenical approach

2.a. Soldier priests

- Chaplaincy and the evolution towards mass armies
- Chaplaincy: mirror of society and military community
- Religion and sacrifice
- Humanitarian dimension (Benedict XV)

2.b. Defining the role of modern chaplaincy

- Conducting religious services (ceremonial)
- Supporting the men in battle
- 179 British chaplains died in service, 3 were awarded the VC
- Moral support to soldiers with fundamental questions
- Support in family problems due to long separation
- Intermediate between men, contributing towards cohesion
- Preservation of human dignity in all conditions
- General welfare (education, recreation,...)
- Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy: 'Woodbine Willie', 'a box of fags in your haversack, and a great deal of love in your heart'
- Tubby Clayton: founder of Talbot House, 'Every Man's Club'
- Someone who cares for the men, as individuals, in the big machinery of war.

3. Conclusion