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Chaplains at War: The Role of Clergymen during World War II
(review)

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Chaplain at War: The Role of Clergymen during World War II. By Alan Robinson. [International Library of War Studies, No. 11.] (New York: I. B. Tauris. 2008. Pp. xii, 252. \$85.00. ISBN 978-1-845-11674-3.)

Alan Robinson's book is one of a growing number of recent studies (of which there remains nevertheless a dearth) on both sides of the Atlantic that focus upon a hitherto neglected aspect of World War II historiography—namely, religion. These works include Arlie J. Hoover's *God, Britain, and Hitler in World War II* (Westport, CT, 1999); Stephen E. Parker's *Faith on the Home Front: Aspects of Church Life and Popular Religion in Birmingham, 1939-1945* (Bern, 2005); and M. F. Snape's *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (London, 2005) and *The Royal Army Chaplains' Department 1796-1953: Clergy Under Fire* (Woodbridge, UK, 2008). Whereas it might ordinarily be assumed that religion and warfare do not mix, and that Christianity, with its founder's epigrammatic instruction to "love your enemies" and its measured just-war theory, always maintains a deeply pacifistic outlook in the face of armed conflict, what these studies demonstrate is a more nuanced picture of British Christianity's part in bolstering the war effort, both on the home front and on the front line. In reality, British Christian leaders supported the war as one that actively opposed evil, recognizing the spiritual opportunities presented by the experience (Parker, *Faith*, pp. 161-74). At a time when Christian motif and language was still widely understood, this was deployed not only by politicians and religious leaders but also circulated in the various media of popular culture to underline the moral purposes of the conflict (Parker, *Faith*, pp. 105-19).

Robinson's account adds to the evidence of Christianity's involvement in the war by presenting a sympathetic rendering of the oral history of clergy who served as chaplains to the forces during the war. By a careful collation of these recollected accounts and a sensitive weaving of these in with available documentary evidence, Robinson draws out themes of the chaplains' *raison d'être*, creating a posthumous celebration of the important part played by such men in bolstering the serving soldiers' morale. Despite the oft-felt role conflict of chaplain—that of one who maintains the Christian ideal of love and brotherhood in the face of violence and hatred—theirs was an often effective and humane ministry amongst the men. Chaplains were relied upon by force commanders—Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery himself opined, "I would as soon think of going into battle without my artillery as without my Chaplains" (p. 64)—and by the men for both religious ministrations and as organizers of social intercourse and entertainment. Against the background of the chaplains' activities during World War I and the development of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department across the interwar and wartime period, Robinson tells a very practical human story of brother serving brother in time of great stress and need, drawing out some of the denominational differences of priority.

Clearly, this well-told and clearly written work augments well the historiography of religion during World War II. It is a volume, however, that benefits being read alongside Snape's more revisionist and expansive *Royal Army Chaplains' Department*, which is less deferential of Alan Wilkinson's earlier work on the subject, *Dissent or Conform?* (London, 1986), or of some of the celebrated Christian "heroes," such as the Peace Pledge Union's Dick Sheppard.

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Transizione epocale: Studi sul Concilio Vaticano II. By Giuseppe Alberigo.

[Istituto per le scienze religiose-Bologna, Testi e ricerche di scienze religiose, Nuova serie, 42.] (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino. 2009. Pp. 895. €55,00 paperback. ISBN 978-8-815-12769-3.)

This collection of Alberigo's writings on the council opens with a warm tribute to him by Cardinal Karl Lehmann, archbishop of Mainz. In it Lehmann affirms that Alberigo's name will be associated in future generations with the Second Vatican Council as firmly as his mentor's, Hubert Jedin, is associated with the Council of Trent. Lehmann's is a sage judgment. Even aside from Alberigo's masterminding the five-volume *History of Vatican II*, the scholarship displayed in *Transizione epocale* validates Lehmann's assessment. As the readers of this journal will understand, the assessment is an implicit rejoinder to Cardinal Camillo Ruini's comparison of Alberigo not with Jedin but with Paolo Sarpi, whose history of Trent, 1619, promptly ended up on the Index. The semi-official disparagement of Alberigo's work that Ruini articulated very much saddened Alberigo's last months.

The topics in the volume range from detailed examination of particulars to the general assessment of the council that Alberigo wrote for the final volume of the *History*. Alberigo's study of the *Regolamento*, the document setting the procedures for the Council, is a fine example of a master historian taking a neglected and, in this case, a somewhat disdained subject and showing its crucial importance. Alberigo establishes, for instance, how the *Regolamento* was designed precisely to ensure a certain outcome of the Council. He goes further to reveal the theological presuppositions governing the document as first devised. These were precisely the presuppositions the majority of prelates at the Council later tried to overturn.

The volume is rich in similar *studi*. Of special note is the longest, "Giuseppe Dossetti al concilio Vaticano II." Aside from its other merits, it displays the privileged place Alberigo had in studying the council. Trained by Jedin, he not only had easy access to him, an official *peritus* at the council, but almost from the moment the council was announced he, a young layman, became an important player on the "Bologna team" (*la squadra bolognese*)