

# History of the Chaplaincy: Some Sources

The US military chaplaincy is older than the nation itself, and armies throughout history appear to have had clergy in their ranks. *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century* chronicles much of this history, and a *Christian Science Monitor* interview with historian [Doris Bergen](#), who edited the book, provides interesting insights into the evolution of military chaplaincies.

As for the American military chaplaincy, probably the most knowledgeable authority is historian and retired chaplain John W. Brinsfield. He has written extensively about the history of US military chaplains, from their origins during the Revolutionary War, their service during the Civil War to the additional duties they have assumed in recent years.

Right: a chaplain at the Battle of Bull Run in 1861.

Below: Chaplain Gary Linsky in a small outpost in Afghanistan, 2007.



Among the most famous chaplain stories is that of the four WW2 clergymen -- one Catholic priest, two Protestant ministers and one Jewish Rabbi -- who gave their lives during an attack on their ship. Two organizations commemorate their story: the [Immortal Chaplains Foundation](#) and [The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation](#).

**MILITARY CHAPLAINS**  
**TOUR OF HIGHER DUTY**  
Read the full series >>



**Military chaplains: A historian's view from the American Revolution to Iraq**  
An interview with the US Army Chaplain Corps historian, John Brinsfield

In connection with the series of [six profiles of US chaplains](#) that grew out of our documentary, the *Christian Science Monitor* published [excerpts from our interview with John Brinsfield](#).

PBS's *Religion & Ethics Weekly* did a report on the training of Army chaplains at the US Army Chaplain School at Ft. Jackson. You can watch the report on-line: "[Army Chaplain Boot Camp](#)"

And, last but far from least, the Library of Congress is compiling interviews with chaplains and chaplain assistants as part of its Veterans History. You can access the audio files and videos at "[Chaplains: On a Divine Mission.](#)"

See also:

**Growing Pluralism of the Chaplaincy**

**Challenges Past and Future**

**Clergy in Uniform**