

I have been aware for some little time that a desire exists among some Chaplains for a uniform, but I have reason to think that this desire is chiefly confined to "Acting Chaplains for Temporary Service", who perhaps do not sufficiently appreciate how it would affect their relationship to the Lower Deck. The glamour, too, of appearing in uniform, and specially when on leave, appeals to some young Chaplains who have come into the Service for the war only. In a question of this character, it appears to me that the only consideration that should really carry any weight is, how the adoption of a uniform will affect the relationship of the Chaplain to the men. On this point I am convinced that the present friendly relationship existing between the Chaplain and the Lower Deck would be seriously marred, and he would henceforth be regarded in the light of an officer and not as the "friend of all on board", as is so happily expressed in the Regulations.

He should above all things be regarded by the men as their friend and adviser, to whom they can have free access at all times. Anything that tends to emphasize the officer side of a Chaplain's position should be discouraged, but, if once a uniform were adopted, he would be regarded as an officer first and Chaplain next, and a wall would be set up between them. Our strength has lain hitherto in not wearing any uniform.

I have consulted a good many of our best and experienced Chaplains on this matter, whose judgment can be relied on, and they almost all are strongly of opinion that it would be a serious error, and most prejudicial to the best interests of the Service, if Chaplains were given a uniform.

I may perhaps incidentally add that some years ago Chaplains in the Army were given a uniform, and after experiment it was discarded, as it made it impossible for them to get near the men, who at once became unnatural when talking to their Chaplains. Of course a uniform is necessary now for Army Chaplains, as they have to go to foreign countries, but they even now find it a hindrance.

It is quite probable that Naval Chaplains have suffered some inconvenience in passing sentries - I have myself - but I count this as nothing compared to the weightier consideration I have put forward. This inconvenience, too, could easily be obviated by each Chaplain obtaining a sort of Certificate from his Captain indicating that he was a Chaplain serving in the Navy, or by wearing when on shore a Badge of some sort on the lapel of the coat.

I earnestly, however, hope that Chaplains will not be given permission to wear a uniform, for I am convinced it would be most prejudicial to their work and influence amongst the men.

If the Board sanction the proposal - which I sincerely trust they will not - I submit that Chaplains should only be allowed to wear uniform when they go on shore, and under no consideration should they appear in uniform on board in carrying out their duties.

If a uniform is sanctioned, it should be made compulsory for all Chaplains to wear it, and it is presumed that a grant in aid of the cost will be given, as the Chaplains, especially the permanent ones who entered the Service on the distinct understanding that no uniform was to be worn, could hardly be expected to meet this unlooked for expense at their own charge. If this were not done, it would give rise to considerable dissatisfaction amongst the permanent Chaplains and a feeling that it was an unfair expense to put them to.

I should like to take this opportunity of pointing out to the Board, that I have reason to know that some Chaplains have recently taken it upon themselves to appear in a variety of "fancy rigs", or semi-uniform, on board their ships, and making themselves look rather ridiculous, which I submit ought not to be allowed. The dress for Chaplains is distinctly laid down in the Regulations, as it is for other officers, and no departure from the Regulations should, I think, be permitted. I would suggest that the attention of Commanding Officers be drawn to this Regulation.

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