



# Chaplaincy: FACING NEW— AND OLD— challenges

**Editor's Note:** This article is the second of a three-part series written by members of the American Correctional Chaplains Association about the role of chaplains in the corrections community.

The transcripts of the 1886 National Prison Congress are very revealing about the relationship at that time between prison administrators and proponents of religious programs. Chaplains were prominent in the proceedings; prayers were offered before each morning and afternoon session and an entire morning's program was devoted to "Moral and Religious Instruction in Prison."

During that session's summation, a participant identified only as Chaplain Parker recounts a revealing incident with an obviously wry sense of humor: "A few months ago, a company of officers thinking, I suppose, to joke me a little, said to me, 'Chaplain, how many of your prayer-meeting men have been converted since you have been here?' I said, 'Gentlemen, before answering that question, suppose I ask another — that is the Yankee way of getting at it. How many of the officers of this prison, during the months of my chaplaincy, sitting in the chapel and listening to the services, have been converted?' Well, that settled the question sufficiently to make them silent."

Back then, chaplains were exclusively Christian. Their unabashed objective was to convert everybody to their particular brand of Christianity, and it was either Jesus' way or no way. Though much of this remains the status

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