



Summon Only the Brave!: Commanders, Soldiers, and Chaplains at Gettysburg

John W. Brinsfield Jr.

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Of the many books written about the Battle of Gettysburg, none has included selections from the collected memoirs of the 238 chaplains, North and South, who were present at the battle--until now.

Because chaplains were considered noncombatants, most, with the exception of Father William Corby of the Irish Brigade, were largely ignored. This unique study has brought to light many of the observations of clergymen, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, who accompanied their regiments wherever they marched, camped, or fought. Some of the memoirs have never been published, others unnoticed for a century. Because this is the first book to approach the Battle of Gettysburg from this perspective, rosters of Union and Confederate chaplains reportedly present at the battle are also included.

To establish reference points for the chaplains' memoirs, they have been placed in the context of the three-day battle itself, a bloody conflict Father James Sheeran of the 14th Louisiana Infantry characterized as a time when he could not have been more frightened "Had Hell itself broken its boundaries." Chaplain Randolph McKim of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry thought that on the firing line he had nothing to do but sit on his horse and be shot at.

After the battle was over, however, chaplains became very busy. They helped bury the dead and comfort 21,000 wounded soldiers. The chaplains themselves did not escape injury. Four chaplains had been killed, wounded, or injured and eighteen captured to be detained in prisons. This is their story in their own words.

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