



Reflections on the Battlefield: From Infantryman to Chaplain 1914-1919 (Liverpool University Press - Liverpool Historical Studies)

Robert J. Rider

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When Robert J. Rider died in 1961, he left to his descendants a typescript text, tentatively entitled *Flashbacks*, which would eventually become *Reflections on the Battlefield*. Broadly autobiographical, this text offers a unique account of its author who fought as an infantryman while also serving as a chaplain, thus exposing himself in peculiar directness to the ambiguities of chaplaincy service on the battlefield. A further particularity is that Rider was in a minority among chaplains, being a Methodist chaplain. In August 1914, Rider, aged twenty-five, was about to begin his third year of training for the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist church, at Handsworth Theological College in Birmingham. Two months later he had enlisted with the First Birmingham Battalion, later termed the 14th Battalion, of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Rider's first-hand accounts of Ypres, the Somme and Arras reveal a man morally opposed to war and yet adamant that Germany and her allies needed to be defeated. *Reflections on the Battlefield* provides us with a personal and valuable contribution to the present-day debate about the contemporary understanding of the ethics of war, as expressed on the World War I battlefield.

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