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# This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War

*James M. McPherson*

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**JAMES M. McPHERSON**

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *BATTLE CRY OF FREEDOM*

*This Mighty Scourge*

Perspectives on the Civil War



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**James M. McPherson : This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This Mighty ScourgeBy Carol CampbellI purchased this book primarily because it was written by Jim McPherson. Unlike other recent purchase, this book was not chosen for immediate research needs. I've had very little opportunity to read -- mainly reading only segments. With that said, I liked what I have seen so far and am looking forward to an opportunity to complete reading the book. I don't think

McPherson's writing can be topped by anyone. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This *Mighty Scourge* By BC This collection of essays, like the material in *Battle Cry Freedom*, is well-researched and presented in a scholarly manner. Encased in an easy-to-read style of writing, Prof. McPherson provides a deep and dynamic understanding of this period in history, while also adding fresh insight into many topics and issues that have been addressed for a century or more. I would recommend this book, or any of his writings, to the serious and amateur historian alike. If fact, I'd recommend this material to anyone wanting to grasp the bigger picture of this critical time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent By M. Fitzgerald Rather than a discussion of particular battles, there are plenty of those books around and many are excellent, this book discusses a number of different issues and puts them the events of the war into context.

The author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom* and the New York Times bestsellers *Crossroads of Freedom* and *Tried by War*, among many other award-winning books, James M. McPherson is America's preeminent Civil War historian. In this collection of provocative and illuminating essays, McPherson offers fresh insight into many of the enduring questions about one of the defining moments in our nation's history. McPherson sheds light on topics large and small, from the average soldier's avid love of newspapers to the postwar creation of the mystique of a Lost Cause in the South. Readers will find insightful pieces on such intriguing figures as Harriet Tubman, John Brown, Jesse James, and William Tecumseh Sherman, and on such vital issues as Confederate military strategy, the failure of peace negotiations to end the war, and the realities and myths of the Confederacy. This *Mighty Scourge* includes several never-before-published essays--pieces on General Robert E. Lee's goals in the Gettysburg campaign, on Lincoln and Grant in the Vicksburg campaign, and on Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief. All of the essays have been updated and revised to give the volume greater thematic coherence and continuity, so that it can be read in sequence as an interpretive history of the war and its meaning for America and the world. Combining the finest scholarship with luminous prose, and packed with new information and fresh ideas, this book brings together the most recent thinking by the nation's leading authority on the Civil War.

From Publishers Weekly Prolific and much-honored historian McPherson (*Battle Cry of Freedom*, etc.) weighs in on the Civil War in this compilation of 16 essays, most of which have appeared in print before—seven of them in *The New York Times*. Revised and edited for this collection, the essays read like chapters in a smooth narrative that addresses some of the biggest questions of the Civil War: why did it start? why did the South lose? what motivated the men who fought on both sides? how do we evaluate the top leaders—including Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Ulysses G. Grant? McPherson goes about answering these and other questions in his usual graceful style, underscored by a thorough grasp of myriad primary and secondary sources on virtually every aspect of the conflict. He forthrightly expresses his opinions while backing them up with well-reasoned arguments, whether challenging the "Lost Cause" argument about why the South lost, or supporting the proposition that it was slavery—and not states' rights—that was the main cause of the war. This strong addition to the massive Civil War canon will appeal to all readers. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From *Bookmarks Magazine* James M. McPherson has written and edited nearly 30 books, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom*. Turf battles aren't uncommon in Civil War studies, and McPherson has a wide reputation as a thoughtful, fair, and readable historian whose insight brings fresh perspective to some often-scrutinized topics. Although McPherson intended some of the essays for an academic audience, each is accessible and worthwhile, and "displays an admirable transparency, showing the historian at work" (*Baltimore Sun*). All pieces have been updated and revised, and each bears the stamp of McPherson's keen intellect applied to topics that continue to generate discussion among Civil War historians and buffs. Copyright © 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc. From *Booklist* McPherson is one of the most prolific and esteemed of contemporary Civil War historians. In this collection of essays, he examines a broad array of topics; many of them continue to bedevil those who study our nation's seminal conflict. In his opening essay, McPherson takes on revisionist historians who discount slavery as the fundamental cause of the war. McPherson's consideration of the career and "martyrdom" of John Brown is both fascinating and incisive, as he illustrates how imagery can be used to portray a man as a crazed murderer or a secular saint. Other topics of note include Lee's goals during the Gettysburg campaign, Grant's reputation as a "butcher" who lacked strategic insight, and Lincoln's use (or abuse) of executive wartime power. As always, McPherson writes with a sharp, succinct style and displays a willingness to challenge current orthodoxies. This work will be an outstanding addition to every library's Civil War holdings. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved