



On nine beautifully manicured fields in Europe lie 31,000 Americans who gave their lives for the cause of freedom in World War I. Another 4,400 are memorialized on Tablets of the Missing. Hundreds of thousands more British soldiers are similarly honored in foreign fields. These commemorative cemeteries, administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, honor men and women who left the comforts of their homes to do battle in distant lands. They were doing their duty in service to their countries. It is unlikely that the ethical or moral parameters of their mission were in their foremost thoughts. But as this important volume illustrates, we must take seriously “the moral and ethical component of being a member of the profession of arms.”

We must do more to develop the moral character of our soldiers—the “spiritual” aspect of leadership. I applaud the Army chaplains of the United States and the United Kingdom for their leadership in organizing and hosting the symposium that resulted in this work. The character of war does not change. It will always be about killing. And there is no tougher test of a man’s character than war. Thus comes into play the indispensable importance of morals and ethics. This is about the character of soldiers and leaders, and what differentiates the best from others. Character is the bedrock of good leadership. As one contributor writes, the soldier has no hope of coming out of battle unscathed either in body or in soul. War wounds not only the body but also the mind and spirit. Soldiers at every level of our profession of arms must consistently delve into the treatment of moral and spiritual injury. Doing so will help grow a soldier’s character.

The essence of the soldier’s duty is sacrifice. Whether through the willingness to leave the comfort and security of family and community, or

in the extreme to risk injury and death, soldiers of all nations are called to sacrifice themselves in service to the common good. In the supreme test, whether such sacrifice is carried out for a national ideal, for a friend or comrade to their right or left, or in fidelity to a sense of duty and the keeping of an oath, sacrifice becomes a living hallmark for true warriors. Indeed, it is for this reason that our nations and our peoples venerate warriors above every other class of citizen; these men and women embody in their willingness to sacrifice a selflessness that is the noblest and highest of virtues.

The First World War offers a vital touchstone to relearning this ideal, but not in a facile or easy manner. A conflict that claimed the lives of millions of military and civilian people reminds us that war is not only a political act but also one that affects the lives and families of those who survive such a conflagration. As a result, the study of such a conflict must be approached soberly, with a professional's concern to learn in order to shape future security decisions, with an appreciation for the cost of war, and with a commitment to avoid it when possible, but to fight and win once undertaken.

World War I therefore continues to provide lessons to study for the contemporary profession of arms. The role of both soldier and national morale were at play in this conflict. As well, significant ethical issues arose then that we continue to ponder today. Foremost among these are that soldiers' psychological, moral, and spiritual injuries remain long after war. These all find currency in the First World War and today. As the title of this work implies, this conflict in particular remains a "persistent fire" that will not be easily extinguished. Rather, our task, through assessment, study, and reflection is to control it and allow it to increase our own understanding about war, and so shape future conflicts, as well as our own ethical and moral thinking.

In my duty as Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission, I have a personal connection to the First World War. The American people have charged our organization to care for the graves and memorials of fallen American Soldiers buried around the world in lands where they fought and died. Once sites of fierce combat in Europe, sites like Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, and Saint-Mihiel are today places of peaceful

rest for our nation's Soldiers who died in the Great War. For the American Battle Monuments Commission, ours is a sacred calling to now tend and care for the graves of these fallen, to honor their memories and service, and to educate today's citizens about the terrible price that America and its Allies have been willing to pay to secure freedom from oppression and tyranny for all nations.

In my nearly 40 years of service to the American people, including my time in uniform as an infantryman, I have lived the cost that must be paid to secure liberty. I know all too well the burden of leading our nation's sons and daughters in battle, including those who do make the ultimate sacrifice. I know also that for many, there are deep, lingering wounds of the soul that remain long after the soldier has returned home to family and community, wounds that often demand the lifelong commitment of the Nation to care for that soldier and his or her family. I continue to find timeless currency in the words of General Douglas MacArthur, himself a veteran of the First World War, spoken to the cadets of West Point: "the soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."

It is for these reasons that I commend this book and, more importantly, the professional reflection on the ethical lessons of World War I that continue to shape the profession of arms today. While serving to remind us of the timeless and sacred nature of sacrifice, and how we are called to honor those who have fought and fallen in conflicts near and far while in service to the Nation, the writings in this volume will cause readers to develop their own understanding of ethical judgment. This is a long overdue and needed resource for today's warriors as we carry on the proud tradition of fighting our nation's wars.

—The Honorable William M. Matz

Major General, USA (Ret.)

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