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Christianity and the Profession of Arms

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The Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.¹ (Field Marshal Sir William Slim)

I Introduction

In 2002, as a young captain, I had the opportunity to visit the Army Recruit Training Centre in Kapooka, New South Wales, Australia, for the first time. At the time I was escorting the Minister for Defence, and part of the itinerary included a visit to the chapel, which had been constructed by Army sappers in 1993. While I was not a Christian at that time (although I had been regularly attending church for a decade), what caught my interest was the image on the stained glass window illustrated in Figure 1. The image depicts a soldier in a scene that would resonate with many Australians who have served in the Army.

The soldier has clearly travelled a

great distance, perhaps patrolling, and possibly under some threat from an unseen foe. During his patrol he has been burdened by a heavy pack which he can no longer carry. The pack is symbolic of the weight, not only of the duties and responsibilities he bears, but also of the guilt he feels—guilt for the acts and omissions arising from the sinfulness and rejection of God that the Bible and human history and experience tell us is common to all mankind. That weight is now too great for him to carry. He can go no further. He has placed his pack on the ground and kneels, clearly exhausted.

The pack appears not to have been simply discarded, but placed carefully, deliberately on a hill. Perhaps he saw the hill from a long way off and made his way towards it. Perhaps he stumbled across it as he stared, fixated on the ground in front of him in his weariness, shuffling forward, one foot in front of the other. More importantly, he has placed his pack at the foot of a cross on which a man—Jesus Christ—has been hung, crucified, in an extreme, violent act of punishment. The

¹ Field Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Papermac, 1986), 183.



Figure 1. A stained glass window in the Soldiers' Chapel at Kapooka depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the surrender of a soldier to Him.

soldier is looking up, expectantly, his expression conveying a question. He appears to be asking the silent figure: 'Can you take up my burden for me?' The image gnawed at my conscience. I could relate to the soldier depicted in the image. But I had never really asked Christ the same question. Could I? Some months later I would.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms. The article will outline the challenge to the profession of arms identified in a recent *Quadrant* article by Professor Michael Evans and briefly address the limitations of his proposed solution—the embracement of stoicism by its members. The article will then argue the case for the enduring value

of the Christian faith to the profession of arms.

II The Problem for the Profession of Arms and the Limitations of Stoicism

Professor Michael Evans claims that the greatest challenge to the western profession of arms emanates from the rise of a selfish society with a deep adherence to moral relativism. He describes a culture in which a 'tsunami of secularism and moral decline ... has left us with a public culture dominated by effete celebrities and corporate billionaires united by their lack of civic virtue' and in which shame has been abolished. Evans implies—correctly in my view—that this leaves those in the

profession of arms with little armour to protect their inner selves.²

The solution, according to Evans, is to embrace the moral philosophy of the ancient Greek and Roman Stoics. I agree with Evans' diagnosis of the problem and its consequences for the profession of arms, but disagree with his proposed solution—the embrace of stoicism by the military professional. The aim of this essay is not to critique stoicism or compare its value with that of the Christian faith. However, my understanding of stoicism is that it is inherently focussed on the self and sets a standard of behaviour that is compromised by the human condition.

It also fails to deal with the two questions in every soldier's mind posed by the reality of the battlefield: what happens when I am killed, and what happens to the person whose life I take in carrying out my orders? In addition to answering those soldiers' questions, I believe that the Christian faith, based on the Bible, provides sound instruction in the eight moral lessons that Evans attributes to stoicism.

I also believe that the Bible is equally effective in posing to the military professional the seven choices Evans describes as stoic. It is also interesting and illustrative of the enduring value of the Christian faith that many of the examples Evans uses as evidence to support or illustrate his argument in favour of stoicism are derived from individuals who, as indicated in the words attributed to them, either are Christian or at least acknowledge God. These include the author of the American Civil War

Soldier's Prayer and Brigadier General Henning von Tresckow of the German resistance to Hitler.

III The Christian Faith

As a Christian—or a believer in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour—I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the saviour prophesied in the Old Testament. I believe that he was crucified on a cross as a sacrificial act of atonement to take the punishment for mine and all humanity's rejection of God and all its consequences. I believe that, in dying on the cross, and through my asking God for forgiveness for my sins through this sacrificial death, Jesus Christ saved me from the punishment that will be meted out on the Day of Judgement referred to in the Bible. I believe that, on the third day after his death, he was resurrected, thus demonstrating his victory over sin and death, and is now seated at the right hand of God and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

That judgement day will be completely just and worse and more effective than any interrogation human beings are capable of, in that all resistance will be ineffective and all our secrets will be revealed. I believe that Christ's kingdom—defined as a kingdom of believers and not geopolitical boundaries—is being spread throughout the world through a process of people hearing God's word and responding in repentance and faith. As a Christian I have many responsibilities, but primarily they are to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love my neighbour

² Michael Evans, 'Stoic Philosophy and the Profession of Arms', *Quadrant*, January-February, 2010, pp. 46–49.

as myself,³ and in accordance with the 'Great Commission', to spread the good news about Jesus Christ throughout all nations.⁴

IV The Enduring Value of the Christian Faith to the Profession of Arms

Despite a rising secularism and increasing anti-Christian agenda evident in public discourse, I believe that the Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms. I do not believe that a Christian faith and service in the armed forces are incompatible and there is a significant body of literature that presents this argument clearly and in a more fulsome manner than is possible here.⁵ The Confederate General, Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson and a recent UK Chief of the General Staff, Sir Richard Dannett, are notable examples of military men who followed the Christian faith.⁶

3 Matthew 22:37. All references from the Bible are from the New International Version (NIV).

4 Matthew 28:18-20. See the Apostles' Creed for an objective statement of the Christian belief.

5 For an explanation of the views that surround the question of whether a Christian should serve in the military, see Mark Warren and Michael Hanlon, *Living by the Sword: Can a Christian Serve in the Military?* (Fighting Words Ministries, 2000).

6 For an exposition of a Christian officer's service in war, including in command appointments, including the influence of faith on these roles, see Major Craig Bickell, 'A Christian in Command—The Example of General "Stonewall" Jackson', in *JOLT*, September 2006, pp. 7–12 <<http://www.focusmilitary.org.au>> or General Sir Richard Dannett, *Leading From the Front* (London: Bantam, 2010).

1. Morale

The Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms because it remains a source of morale for individual soldiers, provides a positive example of leadership and sacrifice, is a source of resilience and heals mental wounds and moral injury. Christian faith informs character, provides a pathway to individual and thus cultural change, informs assessments of what constitutes a 'just war' and ultimately provides a means of overcoming the fear and reality of death that permeates the environment in which the profession of arms operates—the battlefield.

Jesus Christ provides a model of sacrifice to emulate. Faith in Christ commands the believer to emulate Christ in his or her words and actions. Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross on the orders of the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. The Bible teaches that the purpose of Christ's death on the cross was to atone for, or pay the penalty for, human sinfulness or rejection of God. So Jesus laid down his life for others and personally demonstrated what he taught his disciples—'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'⁷

Members of the profession of arms are asked and required to be prepared to give their lives in the service of their nation. While a just cause is an important factor in maintaining a soldier's will to fight, many soldiers derive greater motivation from the knowledge that they are fighting with and for their mates. This may be particularly so when the justness of their cause is in question or open to debate. In this

7 John 15: 13.

way, for Christians serving in the military, Christ laying down his life in an act of service to others—even his enemies—is an example to emulate as they struggle to overcome the natural human desire for survival and fear of death on the battlefield.

2. Leadership

Jesus Christ provides a model of leadership to follow in two important aspects. First, Jesus was obedient to his Father, God, the ultimate authority, to the point of death. He trusted in God's plan for him. In time of war, soldiers will be asked to trust and obey their commanders to the point of death. Jesus is and can be a model of obedience from which to draw inspiration and will. The motto of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is 'Serve to Lead' and Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of the servant leader.

Jesus' sole mission and purpose was to serve humanity by becoming an atoning sacrifice for humanity's rejection of God so that people could know God and return to a restored relationship with him while avoiding eternal punishment. He served and sacrificed himself for those who did not want his service or sacrifice, and who were—who are—in effect, his enemies. Jesus demonstrated the servant nature of his leadership by the act of washing the feet of his disciples as recorded in the Gospel of John⁸ and through the act of willingly going to his death on the Cross.⁹ While I have seen success-

ful leaders sacrifice for and serve their subordinates without holding a Christian faith, it is my view that these leaders have been taught or have seen and adopted the benefits of such a servant leadership model, perhaps without its attribution to the example of Christ.

3. Resilience

Faith in Christ is a source of resilience. Resilience is both an individual's ability to cope with stress and adversity and a measure of the capacity to endure beyond all reasonable limits. This coping may result in the individual's being restored to a previous state of normal functioning, simply not displaying negative effects, or even growing from the experience. Contemporary specialists such as Glenn Schiraldi recognise the value of religion to resilience.¹⁰

The Christian faith holds that 'in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'¹¹ and that 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'¹² A Christian who believes in these words of Paul, that in everything that occurs in one's life God is working to bring about some good purpose and that nothing—even death—will sepa-

and Leadership (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

¹⁰ See the chapter entitled 'Religion and Spirituality' in Glenn Schiraldi, *The Complete Guide to Resilience* (Ashburn, Va: Resilience Training International, 2011).

¹¹ Romans 8:28.

¹² Romans 8:38-39.

⁸ John 13:1-17.

⁹ For a more fulsome discussion of this leadership model and its Christian origins see John Dickson, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love*

rate him/her from God's love, draws on an enormous resource derived from scripture which provides the means to cope with the stress and adversity that life and, more acutely, military operations present.

Even a cursory reading of the Psalms will demonstrate that such resilience is born of a faith that does not deny adversity or fear or claim to control fate.¹³ The perspective of the Psalmist stands in contrast with the self-deceptive 'siren song' of the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley and admired by Michael Evans as the 'most eloquent tribute to the noble essence of the Stoic spirit'. In his poem, Henley proudly claims that, exposed to great adversity and stress (experienced during a lifetime of debilitating illness and infirmity), he has not winced or cried aloud, that he is unafraid and, most famously, that he 'is the master of his fate, the captain of my soul'. But Henley's very experience of life demonstrates that he was not master of his fate and the Bible teaches us that his soul's fate will be determined by God rather than Henley himself. If Henley is the 'Captain of his soul' then God is both its field marshal and Defence Force Magistrate.

Most soldiers would probably relate to the frightened and flawed character who is the principal protagonist in Stephen Crane's American Civil War classic *The Red Badge of Courage*, rather than the apparently unafraid Henley. A wiser soldier would do better to heed Jesus' words:

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them

into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.¹⁴

Linked to resilience is an individual warrior's ability to resist interrogation, and at least one post-Korean War study has identified the value of religious faith and national idealism in resisting indoctrination and interrogation. The *United Kingdom Advisory Panel Report on the Korean War*, in its chapter entitled 'Factors Affecting Individual Resistance in Battle or after Capture', made just such an observation and recommended that those who had this kind of faith and idealism should be encouraged and assisted to strengthen it.

This recommendation was influential in post-Korean War Australia and taken seriously by the Army's Directorate of Military Training. It laid the foundations for the emergence of the Character Guidance Course in the Australian Army in 1959, which sought to develop character through a promotion of the religious and moral tenets of the Christian faith.¹⁵ Not only does faith in

13 For example, see Psalm 121.

14 Matthew 7:24-27.

15 Chaplain E. Sabel, 'A History of Character Guidance in the Australian Army', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, No. 28, May/June 1981, 24, 27.

Christ assist in developing resilience, but there is evidence that it assists individuals to resist and survive interrogation and capture.

4. Fighting power

Faith in Christ is a valuable component of fighting power. The Australian Army's Land Warfare Doctrine 00-2—*Character* recognises that the root of character is a coherent belief and value system. The most influential belief and value system in post-colonial Australian history is the Christian faith, a coherent—albeit now not widely held—belief system. Doctrine therefore recognises Christianity's value as a foundational element of the moral component of fighting power that provides the will to fight.

5. Character

This doctrine makes the profound claim that the combat capability of an Army relies as much on the spiritual and moral qualities that are at the heart of a person's character as it does on physical fitness and skills—perhaps more so when soldiers are under stress.¹⁶ According to Army's doctrine, belief in Christ within its members provides a foundation for the Australian Army's combat capability.

The military has long recognised the importance of character to soldiering. Lord Moran, the medical officer of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers from 1914–1917 and later Churchill's doctor during the Second World War, concluded that:

... fortitude in war has its roots in morality; that selection [recruitment] is a search for character, and that war itself is but one more test—the supreme and final test if you will—of character ... a man of character in peace becomes a man of courage in war. He cannot be selfish in peace yet be unselfish in war. Character as Aristotle taught is a habit, the daily choice of right instead of wrong; it is a moral quality which grows to maturity in peace and is not suddenly developed on the outbreak of war. For war, in spite of much that we have heard to the contrary, has no power to transform, it merely exaggerates the good and evil that is in us, till it is plain for all to read; it cannot change, it exposes.

Man's fate in battle is worked out before war begins. For his acts in war are dictated not by courage, nor by fear, but by conscience, of which war is the final test. The man whose quick conscience is the secret of his success in battle has the same clear cut feelings about right and wrong before war makes them obvious to all. If you know a man in peace, you know him in war.¹⁷

Based on his military experience, particularly commanding the Fourteenth Army in Burma during the Second World War, Field Marshal Sir William Slim observed that 'religion has always been and still is one of the greatest foundations of morale, especially of military morale. Saints and soldiers have much in common ... The Christian

¹⁶ Land Warfare Doctrinal Publication 0-0-2, *Character*, Australian Army, 2005, 1-7.

¹⁷ Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (Garden City Park, NY: Avery, 1987), 159–60.

religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.¹⁸

6. Healing

Faith in Christ also heals mental and spiritual wounds. There is increasing awareness of mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in veterans of operational service. This phenomenon is not new, but recent conflicts and media attention have once again brought what is now commonly referred to as PTSD to the fore. Steven Pressfield, author of *Gates of Fire*, a fictional account of the epic Battle of Thermopylae when 300 Spartans courageously faced an overwhelming Persian army, spoke of 'the guilt of the warrior'. To paraphrase the narrator in that account:

There is a secret all warriors share, so private that none dare give it voice, save only to those mates drawn dearer than brothers by the shared ordeal of arms. This is the knowledge of the hundred acts or omissions where he or she has fallen short. The little things that no one sees. The comrade who fell and cried for aid. Did I pass him by? Choose my skin over his? That was my crime, of which I accuse myself in the tribunal of my heart and there condemn myself as guilty.¹⁹

To use a contemporary example of a soldier burdened by the 'guilt of the

warrior', former Major General John Cantwell, in his recent book, *Exit Wounds*, describes in vivid detail the burdens and guilt arising from his operational service and its consequences on his mental health and relationships.²⁰ Jesus Christ offers a solution to the guilt of Major General Cantwell, the guilt of this author and the guilt and anguish of all Australian servicemen and women who are bearing a burden caused by the physical, mental and spiritual²¹ injuries sustained in their service, when he says:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and you will find rest for your soul.²²

It is a gift and offered freely. I would encourage those suffering such wounds, in addition to seeking help from professional mental health services, also to seriously investigate the Christian faith.²³

7. Worldview

Faith in Christ also helps understand the world in which military opera-

²⁰ See Major General John Cantwell and Greg Bearup, *Exit Wounds: One Australian's War on Terror* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012).

²¹ Spiritual injuries might be guilt, grief, moral injury, hopelessness, betrayal and anger.

²² Matthew 11:28-30.

²³ To investigate Christianity read one of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, and view the DVD series, *Faith Under Fire*, available from all ADF chaplains.

¹⁸ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 183.

¹⁹ Steven Pressfield, *Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae* (London: Bantam, 1999).

tions are conducted. ADF (Australian Defence Force) operations take place in environments of natural disaster, human misery and suffering, war and injustice. These events and exposure to them often constitute the traumatic experience that lead to PTSD among members of the profession of arms. Christ teaches that these events, however traumatic, are inevitable and are signs of His return:

You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.²⁴

The Christian faith helps to explain the context in which military operations take place and provides an explanation of how the suffering and injustice witnessed during these operations by members of the profession of arms will ultimately be resolved. This knowledge contributes significantly to reducing the stress caused by exposure to such events.²⁵

8. Behaviour

Faith in Christ commands behaviours valued by the profession of arms such as obedience to authority, respect and accountability. Christians are

commanded to obey authority. Jesus Christ modelled obedience to authority in obeying his Father to the point of death on a cross. Paul writes to Roman Christians, 'let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.'²⁶ This theme continues in Peter: 'Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority ...'²⁷ Paul commands Christians to 'show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.'²⁸

9. Accountability

Finally, Paul teaches Christians accountability to God through the authorities established by Him:

Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit

²⁴ Matthew 24: 6-8.

²⁵ For a more detailed explanation of how Christian faith informs a response to the suffering and injustice in the world, see C. Bickell, 'Walking the walk on Operations', *JOLT*, May 2007, pp. 10-13, at: <<http://www.focus-military.org.au>>

²⁶ Romans 13:1.

²⁷ 2 Peter 2:13.

²⁸ 2 Peter 2:17.

to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.²⁹

10. Change

Faith in Christ informs a pathway to change. Jesus and the first Christians called people to repent. Repentance is not just feeling sorrow or remorse, but a turning around, a complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction of one's life. Repentance will often lead to an attempt to right a wrong or to seek forgiveness or restore a broken relationship.

In 2012, in response to revelations of unacceptable behaviour and abuse within Defence [the Australian Defence Force] going back many years, Defence's senior leadership published *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*. This document is a statement of Defence's cultural intent and the organisation's strategy for realising that intent. It holds that Defence's work in implementing this strategy begins with accepting individual responsibility for one's own behaviour, assisting others to live the culture, and placing the onus on leaders to be exemplars of positive and visible change at all times. It also involves amending policies and processes that do not align with our cultural intent.³⁰ While not explicitly stated, the strategy aims to respond to and prevent the occurrence of the types of abuse and incidents of unacceptable behaviour that led to the requirement

for such a strategy to be developed.

The Christian faith offers a tried and true pathway to change: repentance and placing one's trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This faith has changed the lives of its adherents and the organisations with which they were affiliated since Jesus first called people to faith in Him. From Saul, the repentant chief persecutor of Christians who became Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles; to John Newton, the repentant slave trader and author of *Amazing Grace*; to Charles Colson, the repentant Chief of Staff to Richard Nixon during Watergate and author of *Born Again*, individuals have been called to faith, responded in repentance, righted wrongs and restored broken relationships and, in so doing, changed their lives and often the course of history.

Defence's strategy to evolve its culture could benefit from acts of repentance and the associated concept of forgiveness derived from the Christian faith. This will be difficult as Jesus Christ both warns and calls people when speaking of the pathway to heaven:

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the path that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the path that leads to life, and only a few find it.³¹

11. Standards and 'Just War'

Christianity also informs the standards of the profession of arms in terms of what comprises a 'just war'. The Christian faith and consequent ideas of two

²⁹ Romans 13:2-5.

³⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*, 2012, at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/pathwaytochange/docs/>

³¹ Matthew 7: 13-14.

leading theologians, Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, have informed the philosophy that underpins the Australian Army's approach to rationalising the use of force, the so-called 'just war' principles.³²

The first and foremost criterion for a 'just war' is that it is only the state that can legitimately wage war. This criterion is derived from Christian theologians such as Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, and is associated with Romans 13 in which the authorities 'have been instituted by God. [They are] the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.'

Second, for a war to be 'just', force must be used only in a just cause. A just cause is one which, drawing on the notion of justice in the Christian tradition, is concerned with justice for all rather than limited to the more common cause of self-defence. In this it is more concerned with the 'defence of others, especially innocent third parties in the face of unjust aggression', than with self-defence.³³ A just cause could be associated with repelling an unjust attack, recovering that which has been unjustly seized, or restoring the moral order. A just cause provides legitimacy for pre-emptive strikes that respond to a threat that is both imminent and grave, but prohibits preventative attacks.

The third criterion is that there must be a 'just' intent in using force. Force should be used only to seek a just peace, informed by a love of one's

enemy rather than hatred or revenge, and a desire to see justice for all, not solely oneself.³⁴ War must be a last resort in that diplomacy must, in good faith, be given time to succeed and alternatives to war must be investigated. These concepts are rooted in the Christian concept of divine hope—a proven hope that God is able to soften hard hearts.

Finally, there must be a reasonable prospect of success. It should be conducted for attainable, limited ends and the costs and benefits must be proportionate. The criteria informed by a Christian faith would both prohibit demands for unconditional surrender from a state and require that the state entertain the option of negotiating a halt or surrendering if the other criteria of just war become unattainable.

These concepts reflect the Christian belief that 'it is not the force of a nation's arms that guarantees that justice will prevail, but the Lord, who is able to defeat even death'. A Christian knows that 'nation states and armies are not the final line of defence against injustice'. Christians can 'surrender, because they know that surrender and defeat does not and cannot mean the end for either Christians or their neighbours'.³⁵

12. Courage

Finally, the Christian faith is a source of courage that provides a means of overcoming the fear and reality of death that permeates the battlefields in which members of the profession of arms operate, risking their lives.

32 LWD 0-0-2 *Character*, 1-4, 1A1-2.

33 Daniel Bell, *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church rather than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 134.

34 Bell, *Just War*, 153–67.

35 Bell, *Just War*, 201.

Christians believe that, whether they live or die, they belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁶ Christians strive to follow Paul, who claimed that for him, 'to live is Christ, and to die is to gain'.³⁷ Christians believe that death is not the end, but that, through their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they will be raised from death and live in eternity in the new heaven and new earth promised in the Book of Revelation. Michael Evans cites the former United States Navy SEAL commando, Richard Marcinko:

It is my unshakeable belief that when ... two intrinsic values—the total acceptance of death as a natural condition of life, and total acceptance of an absolute moral code—are combined, the Warrior becomes invincible.³⁸

Christians accept death as a natural condition of life and view it as simply a temporary journey on their way to their ultimate destination—eternal life with Christ. In my view it is this belief that led Field Marshal Slim to conclude that 'the Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale'.³⁹

V Conclusion

The 'inner armour' of members of the profession of arms in western

militaries is being challenged by an increasingly secularised culture. Stoicism is a limited and incomplete solution because of its inherent self-focus and failure to deal with every soldier's question, 'What happens when I am killed in battle?'

The aim of this article has been to demonstrate the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms. The Christian faith endures as a source of courage and morale, an integral component of fighting power and thus combat capability, a model of leadership to follow. It teaches values and behaviours idealised by the profession of arms, offers a tried and tested pathway to change, and informs the Army's concept of what constitutes a 'just war'.

Members of the profession of arms would benefit from an investigation and serious consideration of the Christian faith. The Army would be well served by encouraging its members who follow the Christian faith to meet, pray, learn from the Bible and encourage one another. The Army should also continue to allow its members to freely hear about, discuss and investigate the gospel, the basis of the Christian faith. Spiritual resilience programs should be informed (but not exclusively) by the Christian faith. Finally, character training programs should be encouraged and continue to embrace the Christian faith as a belief system central to the development of character.

As this article has argued, far from being detrimental, doing so will positively contribute to the Army's fighting power and combat capability.

³⁶ Romans 14:8.

³⁷ Philippians 1:21.

³⁸ Cited in Evans, 'Stoic Philosophy and the Profession of Arms', 49.

³⁹ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 183.