

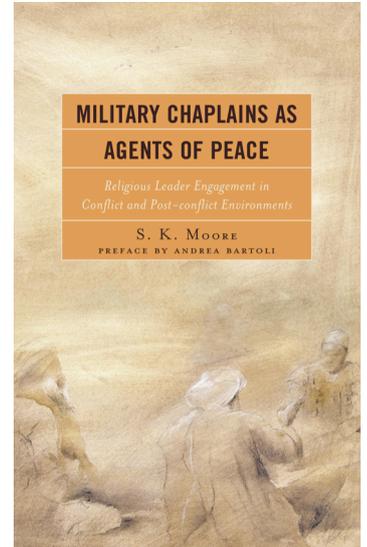
## MILITARY CHAPLAINS AS AGENTS OF PEACE

S.K. MOORE.

LANHAM: LEXINGTON BOOKS, 2013. 318 pp. ISBN 978-0-7391-4910-2.

Reviewed by Leon O'Flynn

The provocative title of this work draws the reader into a world that is unknown to many. For some, the title might be an oxymoron. Readers of this work who have a military background might be surprised by the range of experiences that chaplains have had in the past two decades. Readers who come from a theological perspective might doubt the possibility of any member of the military achieving peace. This book provides a challenge to the worldview of Western military leaders, which is becoming increasingly secular. The prevailing perspective is that religion is akin to membership of a club or team, whereas the majority of conflicts in recent decades have been in places where religion is central to the worldview of the participants. Chaplains can serve as a bridge between these two worlds.



The author has served as a chaplain with the Canadian Forces (CF) for over twenty years, with operational deployments to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti and Afghanistan. Moore has also received a PhD from the University of Ottawa/Saint Paul University, and his ability to reflect critically on his own experiences as well as those of others is a key feature of this book. It must be noted that the foundational assumption of this text is that chaplains can and should play a pivotal role wherever military forces are deployed. This assumption is seen clearly when he defines the purpose of the work: “The offering of this book is an attempt to capture the essence of Religious Leader Engagement (RLE) as an evolving domain of ministry among operational chaplains internationally” (p. 10). Moore defines RLE as any intentional relationship that the chaplain has with a leader in the community: “The intention for RLE is to see *networking* become *partnering* as friendship deepens” (p. 111, emphasis in original).

The book is divided into three parts with eleven chapters, which are outlined as follows. Part I (pp. 1–130) is the theoretical framework. In this section, Moore provides a systems approach to the causes of violence rather than a simplistic listing of grievances that sides might have in a particular conflict. Moore examines the drivers of conflict, highlighting that true peace cannot be achieved by the simple ending of formal or informal warfare. Without fully understanding a conflict, creating long-term permanent peace is not possible. In this section, Moore also defines what RLE is and how it fits with the primary

role of a military chaplain (providing pastoral care). Moore is aware that the very nature of what allows a chaplain to engage in RLE means that he/she is not another military asset. The chaplain is not to abandon his/her pastoral ministry or become an intelligence officer. Instead, what was once an ad-hoc approach, which came forth from the natural connections that an individual chaplain might make, is now a deliberate aspect of the chaplain's role.

In Part II (pp. 131–232), Moore draws examples from recent military deployments of Canada, France, the United States, New Zealand and Norway. Each case study examines a real-life situation where the peacemaking efforts of the chaplains are examined (in the spirit of transparency, it must be noted that the author of this review is the subject of one of these case studies). These cases studies provide a number of different examples of how the theory of Part I might be developed in real terms. The situations include talks between local leaders, training of locals, or understanding the religious needs of peoples. Every case demonstrates how chaplains have helped foster understanding and peace.

Part III (pp. 233–298) is perhaps the least developed section of the book, and the author himself refers to the section as his “musings” (p. 235). The key piece of this section relates how the concepts of the book were developed and then embedded into the training and planning of the CF.

The real strength of this work is that the author has explored a number of models to create a theory to underpin his work. Every chapter is backed up with extensive endnotes for further reading. By providing case studies, Moore also demonstrates that his work is more than academic theory. In examining diverse people, including a Muslim chaplain (p. 144), he emphasises his point that peacemaking is not exclusively Christian. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 (pp. 65–96), while all of the major faiths have helped in peacemaking, they have sadly also contributed to conflicts.

It should be noted that due to the subject matter and the perspective of the author, the book uses military jargon and abbreviations, for example, RLE, CF, RAA, ALWC and DLDC. While each of these is explained, the non-military reader is confronted with a new and unfamiliar language. In addition, those who come from a pacifist perspective may be disappointed by the lack of theological reflection on whether a Christian should/can support the military. Specifically, the book does not address whether the Christian chaplaincy gives tacit support of the Church to government-sanctioned violence or not.

Notwithstanding the above comments, this text will appeal to two broad groups of people. First, those involved in military operations, either

commanding, planning or as chaplains and, second, those reflecting on theological questions, such as just-war theory and pacifism, where Moore has provided fresh insight into the nature of conflict and peace.

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