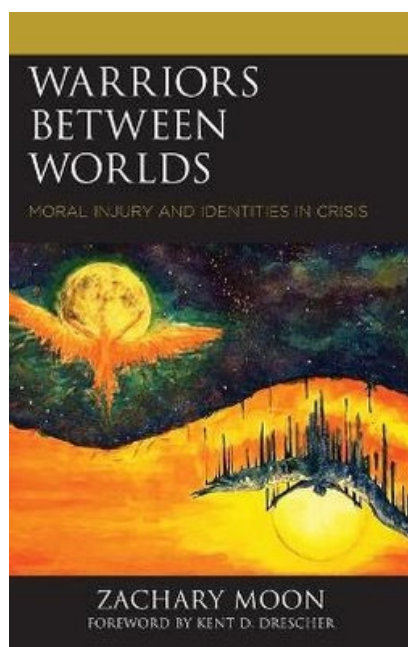


# Book Review of *Warriors Between Worlds: Moral Injury and Identities in Crisis* by Zachary Moon

D Cronshaw



*Warriors Between Worlds:  
Moral Injury and Identities in Crisis*

by Zachary Moon, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2019, 116 + xiv pp., 9781498554619 (pbk).

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

Zachary Moon has served as a chaplain and practical theologian who has listened attentively to Veterans and their experience of diverse moral stresses over the last decade. His service as a chaplain included Veterans Affairs hospitals (2010–11), a program for veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (2011–12) and the US Navy Reserve supporting sailors and marines (2011–19). His scholarship as a practical theologian has led him to consult with churches across the USA on post-deployment re-integration, writing *Coming Home: Ministry That Matters with Veterans and Military*

*Families* (Chalice Press, 2015), completing a PhD at Iliff School of Theology, including practical theological analysis of memoirs by veterans, and teaching as Associate Professor of Theology and Psychology at Chicago Theological Seminary. Moon draws and expands on this pastoral ministry and scholarship in *Warriors Between Worlds*, analysing how moral injury (MI) is complicated by adjustments in moral identity when entering and leaving the military.

Moon collates an outstanding review of the MI literature, evolving definitions, MI's relationship to PTSD and trauma studies, the work of Shay, Sherman, Brock and Litz et al., and the (widely recognised) role of community in recovery. He guides readers through the interdisciplinary treatment of MI — from clinical, ethical and moral philosophy insights and theological contributions.

It is becoming well-recognised that military service and deployments often include experiences of intense stress and trauma that lead to feelings of guilt and shame (towards self), and disgust and contempt (towards others). The distinctive contribution of this volume is that Moon identifies three other periods of stress and possible trauma that need attention from those seeking to prevent or treat MI.

Firstly, soldiers bring a life before military service, and this can have much to do with how they respond and recover from moral trauma or add to the trauma they are escaping. Moon proposes a new model for understanding a person's moral identity — 'moral orienting systems' as the dynamic system of values, beliefs, behaviours and relationships influenced by family of origin, religious and other communities, and significant mentors and experiences, which changes over time.

Secondly, Moon focuses on recruit training. He uses social psychology to evaluate how recruits are systematically transformed in obedience, aggression,

team bonding, urgency, attention to detail and mission accomplishment. For example, one soldier reflected, 'Recruit training changed many things about me. The way I carried myself, the way I spoke, my mannerisms, my habits, and my views on life. Everyone commented on how well I carried myself after boot camp.' (p. 62) This is highly orchestrated with intentional training design but can be highly stressful when it involves new values. Nevertheless, recruits need a new 'moral orienting system' that moves them beyond civilian self-centredness and pleasure satisfaction for the sake of survival and battle functioning. Moon's analysis suggests there are ways to build resilience in initial training which help recruits avoid or better recover from MI.

Thirdly, Moon explains that a final focused period of stress and trauma is re-entry to civilian life. He argues that boot camp prepares recruits well for deployment. However, there are limited equivalent 'boots to shoes' training that helps veterans navigate the moral stress of post-deployment transition back to the civilian world. He suggests this ideally includes empathetic professional support, sustaining camaraderie, locating opportunities for community service, and rescripting for non-battle-ready contexts while utilising other strengths of military service in purposeful vocational directions.

Moon also emphasises utilising canine or equine therapy, mindfulness and yoga. Moon critiques the mythology that veterans are either heroes or headcases and urges families, friends and faith communities to supportively hear individual stories beyond naïve questions like, 'Did you kill anyone?' Nevertheless, re-entry may need to include taking responsibility for actions including killing, and soldiers and communities together critiquing the justness of war and the pervasiveness of violence in

their values. Soldiers may bear the worse effects of MI, but society must also conscientise their role in war.

*Warriors Between Worlds* is an insightful deep dive into the lived experience of people adjusting as they enter the military and then re-enter civilian life. It focuses on Moon's American situation but is relevant to other contexts. Moon models valuable practical theological research by drawing on multiple sources, especially the voices of those affected, to understand the moral challenges they are working through and to develop appropriate ministry responses. The book points to the nature of compassionate understanding that will help foster creative and courageous post-traumatic growth. It is highly recommended reading for military members and veterans, chaplains and other caregivers, including healthcare workers and concerned faith community leaders.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Australian Army, the Department of Defence or the Australian Government.

Darren Cronshaw is a Support Chaplain serving at the Defence Force School of Signals. He is also Professor of Practical and Intercultural Theology with the Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity).

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*Corresponding Author: D Cronshaw,*

[\*darren.cronshaw@defence.gov.au\*](mailto:darren.cronshaw@defence.gov.au)

[\*dcronshaw@acom.edu.au\*](mailto:dcronshaw@acom.edu.au)

*Author: D. Cronshaw<sup>1,2</sup>*

*Author Affiliations:*

*1 Australian Army – Chaplaincy*

*2 Sydney College of Divinity - Australian College of Ministries*