

BOOK REVIEWS



Larry Graham, *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 192 pp.

This book, released just months before the author's passing, will add to Larry Graham's enduring legacy of scholarship, wisdom, and compassion among his family, colleagues, students, and the wider community. Moral injury is a construct that has emerged in recent years to describe a consequence of intense moral pain experienced by military veterans forced to make impossible moral choices in the context of war. Graham's book provides a framework to extend this construct to encompass the moral lives of all of us, particularly those who have not experienced the moral landscape of war. From the perspective of this reviewer, this frame offers both benefit and peril to the understanding of moral injury. On the one hand, broadening the frame to include everyday moral dilemmas and injuries potentially enlarges the supportive community for veterans affected by moral injury. An unintended consequence however, might be the diminishing of civilians' awareness of the unique and intensely painful experience of moral injury related to combat. The three sections of Graham's book are written to address the moral tumult religious professionals experience personally and in their role as moral healers and guides and, more generally, to guide everyday people.

In the first section, after establishing the particular theological and ethnocultural lens from which he writes, Graham begins to define the moral landscape within a social context in a way that is quite consistent with recent research in moral psychology. Extending beyond the Western hierarchical and individualistic perspective on morality, Graham notes the rich

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contributions of more communal African and Native American moral traditions and practices. Graham provides three helpful anchor points that readers can utilize to make best use of the material. One anchor, which he calls "habits of mind," provides practical guidance on how to use and how not to use the material. A second anchor, which he calls "commitment to the concrete," encourages readers to utilize strategic examples of moral dissonance and injury presented within the book to ground themselves and to help give reality to the healing process he describes. The final anchor is called "contextual creativity." In essence, this is the human capacity and freedom to make decisional moral choices in each present moment, choices that either uphold or violate shared communal values and lead toward either moral integrity or moral injury. The concept of making present-moment decisions to take values-based action is a key element of several emergent psychological interventions for the healing of moral injury.

In his second section, Graham defines key terms that are helpful in the discussion of human morality, including moral dissonance, moral dilemmas, moral injury, and moral healing. He also provides a chapter that illuminates the intersection between traditional Christian understandings of God and the moral conundrums of daily human life. Additionally, he provides a helpful summary of current research findings from moral psychology that can help readers understand the sources of moral conflict. The final chapter in the section provides guidance for understanding the emergence of moral injury, particularly in the context of varied traumatic life experiences.

The final section of the book is devoted to the healing of moral injury. Its strength is found in its communal and community focus. In one chapter, Graham further develops the concept of collaborative conversation that he has written about previously. The bulk of the chapter is an extended habits-of-mind exercise in which Graham provides the helper side and the reader imaginatively provides the other side of a healing conversation. Graham also puts forward the beneficial role of healing rituals of lamentation and memorial in helping individuals reintegrate within communities and heal from moral injuries.

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Overall, Graham's book is a unique and important contribution to the field, particularly for religious professionals. It provides useful tools for personal reflection that may better prepare the helper to assist in the healing of others.

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