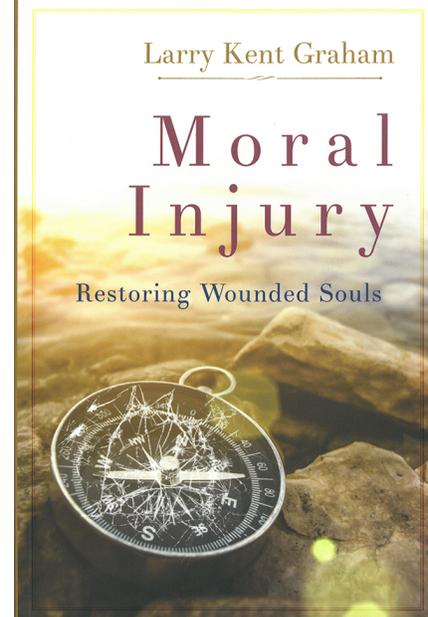


**Review of *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls* by Larry Kent Graham (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017)**

*Reviewer: Joretta L Marshall; Brite Divinity School*

Dr. Larry Kent Graham is a leader in the integrative work of pastoral theology, care, and counseling. Over the years, I have been deeply impressed with his many presentations, articles, and books. Building on his intellectual curiosity and experience, alongside his adept skills as a researcher, teacher, and care specialist, Dr. Graham provides the reader and listener with engaging, thoughtful, and insightful work. *Moral Injury* is illustrative of Dr. Graham's unique ability to bring the best of scholarship and research in fields such as theology and ethics into constructive conversation with the practices of care and counseling.



The term “moral injury” has taken on new significance in the culture, particularly among those who are companions in spiritual care. One of Graham’s gifts in this book is his ability to frame the conversation related to the care of wounded souls in ways that are imaginative and grounded in pastoral theological endeavors. In this book, Graham demonstrates his ability to lead the reader through moral complexities, honoring the richness of diversity, while encouraging those of us called to be pastoral caregivers to recognize that people caught in the trauma of moral injury deserve concrete and thoughtful responses.

From the beginning of his text, Graham notes the complexities of terms and perspectives while, at the same time, not losing sight of the necessary work of finding a way forward in conversations related to soul care. He neither dismisses the daunting task that looms in front of many of us as we wrestle with the moral ambiguities that surround us, nor does he get lost in chasing those complexities in ways that do not lead us toward some kind of specific response.

Graham spends time in the first section of his book “Mapping the Moral Landscape.” Paying attention to definitions as he provides a frame for his work, Graham articulates the difference between such terms as moral dissonance (“internal sense of right and wrong is unclear or in conflict”), moral climate (“matrix of operative moral values and demands”), moral dilemmas (“tensions and struggles that arise in individuals and communities”), and moral injury or moral trauma (“the burden of harm and the diminishment of vitality . . . when we [or others] violate our moral compasses”). Likewise, he offers a reminder that moral injury can arise from our own agency and actions, or can be caused by the agency and actions of others. His definitions are clear, yet ambiguous enough to allow for the diversity of human experience. Ultimately, his suggestions provide a way for reflecting upon the meaning of our concrete responses in the midst of moral injury.

Filled with illustrations and examples of the experiences of others, Graham demonstrates what is at stake in our images and understandings of God as he explores the moral challenges of pastoral care. His ability to articulate theological constructions that surround and inform our care provides an invitation to practitioners to struggle with the ways we imagine the connections of God, human relatedness, and community. In so doing, caregivers are invited to re-imagine and re-construct theological claims that are informed by our pastoral work.

The last section of Graham's book is titled "Reckoning and Repair." Again, Graham dives deeply into the complexities and ambiguities as he attempts to provide a working definition for the term "soul." Once again, he offers the reader an opportunity to reflect on the complexity of this language, yet not get stuck in wandering lest we miss the opportunity to positively engage human beings in our encounters. His chapter on healing collaborations provides an exceptional roadmap for those who would dare to join persons in the work of healing through conversations, rituals and memorials. For those practitioners who seek the "how to" of response, this section will be most helpful; for those who want to reflect on the deeper meanings of the activities of care, this section is provocative and incredibly rich.

I highly recommend this book to colleagues in specialized ministries. It is also with a grateful heart that I recognize the gift of the United Methodist Church's Endorsing Agency and the work of Rev. Bruce Fenner, in particular. With the ongoing persistence of Rev. Fenner, Dr. Graham's work has been made available to all in the endorsing community. This work represents the power of collaborative and integrative pastoral theology and care.