

M. Jan Holton and Jill L. Snodgrass, eds. *Reframing Trauma: A Psychospiritual Theory and Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2025. 278 pages.

Reframing Trauma challenges event-based definitions of trauma by proposing a psychospiritual framework that integrates the contextual, communal, and spiritual dimensions of suffering and discusses how trauma should be addressed from a theological perspective. The editors argue that biomedical and diagnostic models fail to account for the relational, communal, and spiritually embedded nature of trauma, particularly as is experienced within systems of oppression, ecological disruption, and historical violence.

The book is organized around several interrelated concepts. First, the stress–trauma continuum (p. 31) reframes trauma not as a singular endpoint but as part of a dynamic spectrum of stress experiences shaped by perception, culture, and meaning-making. Within this framework, eustress (positive or adaptive stress), distress, and trauma are understood as qualitatively distinct yet interconnected responses to lived experience. This nonhierarchical model challenges the assumption that trauma must be defined solely by external events and instead emphasizes how individuals and communities interpret and embody stressors in particular social and spiritual contexts.

The stress–trauma continuum originated from the stress-trauma-crisis continuum, initially developed by social work researchers to aid in assessment and intervention. However, the authors present the stress–trauma continuum specifically for caregivers because their purpose in using this language is different (language matters!). Their aim is to support integrated care that trusts care receivers—both individuals and communities—to possess the wisdom and capacity to move through suffering toward resilience by engaging in theological reflection alongside trauma work. This requires professionals in fields dealing with individuals' spirituality to avoid relying on Western medical-diagnostic thinking and language that limits, medicalizes, colonizes, and event-focuses individual and communal life through a trauma lens. Instead, the goal is to help individuals move beyond their embedded theology (such as the shame or guilt that leads to estrangement from self, others, and God) and construct a life-giving, deliberative theology. This focus supports understanding trauma in both individuals and communities and provides an escape from colonial and pathological modes of thinking that can constrain life.

The volume also situates trauma within communal and ecological frameworks. Contributors examine how trauma is shaped by collective histories, social structures, and environmental crises, challenging the hyper-individualized orientation of much of Western clinical discourse. Chapters address gendered and racialized trauma, LGBTQ+ community experiences, migration and displacement, and the ecological crisis and grief, demonstrating how trauma emerges at the intersection of personal suffering and

systemic harm. This broad contextualization strengthens the book's theological vision by foregrounding the ethical and communal dimensions of care. Because individuals and communities are interconnected, the holistic healing that collective recovery brings to individuals cannot be fully realized or addressed by a purely medical, Western, and colonial mindset.

One of the book's major strengths is its interdisciplinary and pluralistic orientation. Drawing on theology, psychology, social sciences, and lived experience, the volume offers a richly textured account of trauma that transcends reductionist models. Its commitment to justice-oriented, culturally responsive, and ecologically attuned care is especially valuable for practitioners working in diverse and marginalized contexts. Additionally, the stress–trauma continuum provides a flexible and accessible framework that avoids rigid diagnostic hierarchies while preserving the gravity of traumatic suffering.

For professionals in pastoral and spiritual care, chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and formation—and for those who practice the ministry of presence—the book offers both conceptual depth and practical relevance. Its psychospiritual framework aligns closely with the reflective practices central to clinical pastoral education (CPE), particularly the clinical method of learning (action–reflection–action). Reframing trauma and recentralizing how to respond to it encourage caregivers trained in this method to attend to their own spiritual and emotional landscapes as well as those of the people they serve, supporting more integrated approaches to supervision, mentoring, and formation.

A potential limitation is that readers seeking concrete clinical techniques or standardized interventions may find the book more conceptual than prescriptive. Its theological and theoretical density may also challenge practitioners accustomed to linear or protocol-driven models of care. However, this complexity reflects the editors' conviction that trauma cannot be adequately addressed through simplified frameworks and that spiritual caregivers require conceptual tools capable of engaging suffering in its full existential, relational, and systemic depth. In particular, their invitation to us to stay in dialogue across diverse perspectives and cultural and spiritual practices resembles being in an ongoing process, a *continuum*.

Overall, *Reframing Trauma* succeeds in offering a compelling psychospiritual theory and theology of trauma that deepens both scholarly understanding and pastoral practice. It reframes trauma as not only an existential reality but also a vital site of theological reflection and communal care. I highly recommend this volume to religious and spiritual professionals seeking to cultivate compassionate, culturally responsive, and spiritually integrated approaches to trauma-informed ministry.

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