

**Moral Injury and the Atonement  
of Jesus Christ:  
A Latter-day Saint Guide for  
Healing the Wounded Soul**



**Austin J. Bowler**

**This work is dedicated to my  
wife, Michelle, and my three  
lovely daughters—Emma, Mary,  
and Anne—pure sources of joy in  
my life.**

©All rights reserved, 2017  
Authored by Austin Bowler  
Religious Education  
Brigham Young University  
For more information contact  
[austin.bowler08@gmail.com](mailto:austin.bowler08@gmail.com)

**Moral Injury and the Atonement  
of Jesus Christ:  
A Latter-day Saint Guide for  
Healing the Wounded Soul**

# Contents

<b>Purpose</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>Definition of Terms</b> .....	10
<b>Section 1 – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder</b> .....	15
Historical Predecessors of PTSD .....	15
The Importance of Trauma and the Development of PTSD ..	17
Treatment for Trauma and PTSD .....	21
Differentiating PTSD and Moral Injury .....	23
Historical Predecessors of the Current Moral Injury .....	25
What is Moral Injury? .....	27
Spiritual Considerations of Moral Injury .....	36
Types of Moral Injury and Examples of Morally .....	
Injurious Events .....	40
Treatment of Moral Injury .....	44
<b>Section 2 – The Redemptive, Salvific Power of Jesus Christ</b> ..	54
The Different Models of Atonement .....	54
The Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of .....	58
The Atonement of Jesus Christ: .....	64
Latter-day Saint Perspectives .....	64
The Suffering of Jesus Christ .....	72
The Descent of Jesus Christ Below All Things .....	77
The Ability of Jesus Christ to Succor .....	82
<b>Section 3 – Accessing the Healing Power of Jesus Christ</b> ....	87
A Conceptual Model for Healing Moral Injury .....	88
Personal Devotional Applications .....	95
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	98
<b>Recommended Reading List</b> .....	100
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	103

## Purpose

For nearly a decade, moral injury in service members of the United States Armed Forces has been a topic of ever-increasing research and study. Mental health professionals and pastoral caregivers alike are seeking ways to understand and address the issue of wounded moral beliefs in service members. In this endeavor, the power of Jesus Christ enabled by His atoning sacrifice as understood by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers a method of healing and repair for wounds of the soul, including those experienced in moral injury. The purpose of this guide is to generate a better understanding of moral injury and the healing power of Jesus Christ per Latter-day Saint (LDS) doctrines and teachings to help military chaplains aid Latter-day Saint service members in the process of healing and repairing soul wounds. This guidebook is primarily intended for the narrow population of LDS military chaplains and service members; however, it is possible that some of the material applies outside the military context with other LDS chaplains and civilians as well as chaplains and civilians not of the LDS faith.

Since moral injury is predicated on the breach of a person's moral or religious beliefs (which are diverse), this guide builds upon the idea that an understanding of Latter-day Saint beliefs will aid chaplains in their pastoral care. Part of the purpose of this guide is realized in the identification of an underlying belief system for Latter-day Saints regarding moral injury and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. One might assume that LDS morals and beliefs are the same as other Christians, but their differences and specific beliefs about the Atonement of Christ can potentially help provide better pastoral care. This research based guide will therefore increase a chaplain's understanding

and awareness of moral injury, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and how the power of Jesus Christ is incorporated into helping Latter-day Saints in the process of recovery and healing from moral injury.



Robert T. Barrett, *Christ Walking on the Water*, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/jesus-walking-on-water-129516?lang=eng>.

## Introduction

This guide examines moral injury for the benefit of Latter-day Saint (LDS) military chaplains who may approach the issue in their pastoral care with LDS service members. Moral injury is best introduced by its relationship with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). At the turn of the twenty-first century, Dr. Johnathan Shay, MD, PhD and Dr. Edward Tick, PhD both wrote extensively about war's effects on the character and soul of a warrior.<sup>1</sup> Their research explores the involvement of morals and ethics with the modern diagnosis of PTSD by using both classical narratives (e.g., the *Iliad*) and contemporary war accounts to illustrate their findings. Both Dr. Shay and Dr. Tick advocate similar insights noting, respectively, “the essential injuries in combat PTSD are moral and social,” and “that PTSD is primarily a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic disorder.”<sup>2</sup> These early observations reflect the current definition of moral injury, a term used to describe the mental, emotional, and spiritual wounds a person might experience during war often in tandem with traumatic experiences.

In 2009, clinical psychologist Brett T. Litz, PhD et al. recommended a working identification of events that might cause moral injury, describing them as “perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”<sup>3</sup> They also

1. Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, NY: Atheneum Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994); Jonathan Shay, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2002); Edward Tick, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2005).

2. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 187; Tick, *War and the Soul*, 108.

3. Brett T. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A

proposed that a working definition of moral injury include “an act of transgression that severely and abruptly contradicts an individual’s personal or shared expectations about the rules or the code of conduct, either during the event or at some point afterwards.”<sup>4</sup> These events might include “participating in or witnessing inhumane or cruel actions, failing to prevent the immoral acts of others, as well as engaging in subtle acts or experiencing reactions that, upon reflection, transgress a moral code.”<sup>5</sup> Then after the perpetration, “an individual must also be (or become) aware of the discrepancy between his or her morals and the experience (i.e., moral violation), causing dissonance and inner conflict,” in order to be categorized as having moral injury.<sup>6</sup> Within these parameters it is possible that warriors who presently display symptoms of PTSD as a result of their combat experience might simultaneously be experiencing moral injury.

Based on the notion that military personnel are repeatedly in unique situations regarding morality and decision-making they become particularly vulnerable to moral injury.<sup>7</sup> For

---

Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 29, no. 8 (December 2009): 700.

4. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700.

5. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700.

6. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700. Note: “Moral injuries are wounds to beliefs and, secondarily, to the identity of the person holding those beliefs, inflicted by events that violently contradict them. Contradictions between expectations and reality are often not immediately apparent to the person whose brain is laboring to reconcile them. Contradictions and betrayals of trust often take time to sink in, to get past all the compartmentalizing and denial and all the other tricks we use to protect ourselves from such internal dissonance.” See Bill Russell Edmonds, *God is Not Here: A Soldier’s Struggle with Torture, Trauma, and the Moral Injuries of War* (New York, NY: Pegasus Books LLC, 2015), 17.

7 Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), xv–



example, the military trains service members to follow orders and trust that the orders given them are morally sound. Unfortunately, commanders are not exempt from fallible factors like human imperfection, dubious moral standards, and the misuse of power and authority. Consequently, conflict may arise between a person's moral values and the directives given by his or her leadership who have determined for them whether a specific action was right or wrong, necessary or unnecessary. Some service members engage in actions that may be both justifiable and ethical according to their command, but are in opposition of the warrior's personally held moral beliefs.



Spc. Michael J. MacLeod, *Waiting to Jump*, U.S. Army photo, June 16, 2009, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/3663160710/intro\\_pic.jpg](https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/3663160710/intro_pic.jpg)

In an effort to specify what might be constituted as moral injury, researchers have recently allocated “two broad categories of war-related moral injury: perpetration and betrayal-based injuries.”<sup>8</sup> Perpetration consists of “relevant events and experiences [that] range from the actual perpetration of acts of unneces-

---

xvii.

8. Brett T. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure: A New Treatment for Military Trauma, Loss, and Moral Injury* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2016), 117.

sary or capricious violence to perceived acts of commission or omission that violate the service member's or veteran's sense of honor and duty.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, these morally injurious events result from how a service member used their autonomy to act or not to act in a given situation. Betrayal-based injuries “chiefly stem from leaders’ behaviors and judgements that are capricious, dangerous, and entail grossly unfair mistreatment...likely to be associated with no attendant redress or justice,” leading to a loss of trust by service members in appointed leadership.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, both acts of perpetration and betrayal create situations in which moral injury may occur.

These kinds of events can leave service members with symptoms comparable to PTSD, but those suffering moral injury can also have unique symptoms of their own.<sup>11</sup> Mental health professionals are distinguishing differences between the two. For example, more specific to moral injury is the experience of “anomie, pervasive shame and guilt, reductions in trust in self-and others in terms of moral behavior (*a broken moral compass*), poor self-care, self-harming and self-handicapping behaviors, loss of faith in God (if applicable)... externalizing, blaming, and aggressive acting-out behavior.”<sup>12</sup> Service members with moral injury experience some symptoms that are not a part of current PTSD diagnosis criteria, which primarily addresses mental or emotional wounding. Rather, wounds sustained by moral injury may include a “change in or loss of spirituality,” because of the mental, emotional, and spiritual difficulties associated with

---

9. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 117.

10. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 122.

11. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 696–699; Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 21.

12. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 22.

“guilt, shame, and forgiveness.”<sup>13</sup> In August 2010, an issue of *Military Medicine* reported that “the danger of spiritual and moral trauma is real, and it can initiate a downward spiral of physical, psychological, and behavioral problems in the service members.”<sup>14</sup> As a result of the connections between moral injury, spirituality, and mental health it begs the question of who ought to assist service members in their journey to heal as they struggle with moral injury.



Sgt. Efrén Lopez, *Mass in Afghanistan*, U.S. Air Force photo, February 21, 2010, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.flickrz.com/photos/35703177@N00/4398466984/intro\\_pic\\_2.jpg](https://www.flickrz.com/photos/35703177@N00/4398466984/intro_pic_2.jpg)

Receiving assistance from a mental health professional is a viable option to engage in a healing process from moral injury. Additionally, according to psychologists P. Scott Richards, PhD and Allen E. Bergin, PhD, pastoral professionals can also be a helpful resource for healing, particularly in counseling with individuals whose inner turmoil and religious beliefs have

---

13. Kent D. Drescher et al., “An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans,” *Traumatology* 17, no. 1 (March 2011): 9.

14. David J. Hufford, Matthew J. Fritts, and Jeffrey E. Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” *Military Medicine* 175, no. 8S (August 2010): 73.

become entangled.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Richards and Bergin suggest, “clergy and other pastoral professionals are front-line mental health workers,” because many people are inclined to go to them for help in times of distress.<sup>16</sup> As pastoral professionals, military chaplains are uniquely positioned to assist in the healing process of moral injury because they “operate within the religious dimension and are comfortable with it... as both commissioned military officers and fully qualified religious professionals,” who advocate for the “religious, moral, and spiritual well-being and resiliency” of service members.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, chaplains will inevitably encounter and engage moral injury in their pastoral counseling.

Given the “increasing spiritual diversity of the U.S. Armed Forces,” a chaplain’s ability to consider the variety of religious and spiritual worldviews they might encounter in pastoral counseling becomes a significant task.<sup>18</sup> The morals and values many people embrace are founded on spiritual or religious theological schemas that are deeply rooted within a person’s character.<sup>19</sup> For example, members of The Church of Jesus

---

15. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, “Religious Diversity and Psychotherapy: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Future Direction,” in *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*, 2nd edition, edited by P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, 475–487 (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 486.

16. Richards and Bergin, “Religious Diversity and Psychotherapy,” in *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*, 2nd edition, 485.

17. Dayne Nix, “Chaplains Advising Warfighters on Culture and Religion,” in *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement and Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments*, edited by Eric Patterson, 43–62 (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2014), 46; U.S. Department of Defense, “Religious Affairs in Joint Operations,” JP 1-05. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, November 20, 2013): I-1.

18. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 73.

19. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 76.

Christ of Latter-day Saints<sup>20</sup> have faith in principles and doctrines of morality established by God’s eternal laws. Bearing this in mind, not only Latter-day Saints but all service members with a faith background whose values and morals are spiritually centered are at risk for moral injury<sup>21</sup>—and they ought to have resources available to promote and preserve high levels of overall fitness and healing in case an event does occur.

The content of this guide is divided into three sections. Section 1 contains a synopsis of PTSD because it is or can be part of moral injury and is seen as a diagnostic predecessor that is relatable to the developing construct of moral injury. Section 1 also provides a review of literature on moral injury. Section 2 of this guide briefly reviews different models of atonement theory in Christianity, followed by a survey of LDS teachings and perspectives on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Section 3 provides a conceptual model for accessing the healing power of Jesus Christ through suggested lists of doctrines, principles, and applications.

---

20. Within this document, “the Church” refers to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and “Latter-day Saints” or “LDS” most often refers to its members, though “Latter-day Saint” can also refer to the Church. Common nicknames for these titles are “Mormon” or “Mormons,” and they are scarcely used within this guide.

21. For example, service members who violate their moral code by participating in or witnessing events (potentially traumatic) that transgress their values, to include not stopping such events.

## Definition of Terms<sup>22</sup>

**Military Chaplain** – Commissioned officers of the armed forces whose primary purpose is to ensure protection of the right to the free exercise of religion within the military. As staff officers, military chaplains offer spiritual, moral, and ethical leadership and advising for commanders. Military chaplains are also expected to either perform or facilitate pastoral counseling, religious services, and conduct programs intended to meet both religious and temporal needs of service members and their families. Additionally, they train and deploy with their military units, and during peacetime engage in the daily lifestyle of military service.<sup>23</sup>

**Moral Injury** – The result of experiencing or witnessing an act or the aftermath of an act (intentional or unintentional) which transgresses a person's moral or ethical standards based on reli-  
22. Some of the definitions are constructed by incorporating a variety of academic works to establish a cohesive meaning for the guide's purposes. Other definitions are purposefully drawn from the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and are considered sufficient for their application and use of this guide.

23. See the following regulations concerning definition of chaplains: U.S. Department of the Army, "Army Chaplain Corps Activities," AR 165-1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, June 2015); U.S. Department of the Air Force, "Chaplain Planning and Organizing," AFI 52-101 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Air Force, December 2013); U.S. Department of the Air Force, "Chaplain, Chaplain Corps Readiness," AFI 52-104 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Air Force, August 2015); U.S. Department of the Navy, "Professional Naval Chaplaincy," SEC NAV INSTRUCTION 5351.1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, April 2011); U.S. Department of the Navy, "Religious Ministry in the Navy," OPNAV INSTRUCTION 1730.1E (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, April 2012); U.S. General Military Law, "U.S. Code, Title 10," (2007). Within this guide the use of the term "chaplain" usually denotes a "military chaplain."

gious, spiritual, cultural, or other collective constructs of morality. This may include direct or indirect participation in acts of war by a person's own volition or in response to a given command (e.g., killing, witnessing atrocities, etc.). The effects of moral injury consist of varying emotional and behavioral responses such as: shame, guilt, anxiety, anger, anomie, and self-condemning, harming, or debilitating actions.<sup>24</sup>

**Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** – A trauma- and stressor-related psychiatric disorder defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) that is caused by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event (e.g., death or severe injury, sexual assault, etc.) resulting in persistent negative memories of or reactions to the incident. Persons with PTSD may experience intrusive or negative thoughts, emotions, and memories of the event manifest in a variety of patterns or behaviors (e.g., dreams, flashbacks; consistent fear, anger, guilt, apathy, etc.). Additionally, efforts to avoid reminders of the trauma may occur as well as sudden irritability or emotional outbursts when exposed to or reminded of stimuli relating to the experience.<sup>25</sup>

---

24. Shira Maguen and Brett Litz, "Moral Injury in the Context of War," PTSD: National Center for PTSD, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016), last updated February 23, 2016, accessed January 31, 2017, [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral\\_injury\\_at\\_war.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp); Brett T. Litz et al., "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans," 695–706.

25. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders*, 5th edition, (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 271–280; American Psychiatric Association, "What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?" reviewed by Ranna Parekh, July 2015, (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2017), accessed January 31, 2017, [https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd?\\_ga=1.51676201.1226557283.1485890924](https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd?_ga=1.51676201.1226557283.1485890924).

**Transgression** – The “infringement or violation of a law, command, or duty,” to include the laws, commands, and duties established by government, religion, etc. to which a person is accountable.<sup>26</sup> A transgression is also the violation of individual or collective moral principles and expectations.<sup>27</sup>

**Guilt** – The state of being or imagined state of being (feeling) of a person who has committed an act of perpetration or offense against established standards or laws under which he or she is or believes to be accountable, to include “feelings of deserving blame,” for a specific action or inaction.<sup>28</sup>



Staff Sgt. Javier Orona, *Airborne Operations*, U.S. Army photo, February 10, 2016, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/24847192441/definition\\_of\\_terms.jpg](https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/24847192441/definition_of_terms.jpg)

**Shame** – “A painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety, [or] the susceptibility to such emo-

---

26. Merriam-Webster Dictionary s.v. “transgression,” accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transgression>.

27. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700.

28. Merriam-Webster Dictionary s.v. “guilt,” accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guilt>.



tion; a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute,” to include criticism, condemnation, or disapproval of a person’s actions by oneself or others.<sup>29</sup>

**Atonement** – Jesus Christ’s sinless offering of suffering in Gethsemane, suffering and death on the cross, and resurrection for the purpose of reconciling men and women to God with whom they are estranged because of transgression, sin, and physical death. The Atonement of Jesus Christ empowers faith (belief and action) leading to repentance (change) and forgiveness of transgressions, sins, and injustices of life. The power of Jesus Christ also enables divine empathy and consolation to persons afflicted physically, emotionally, and mentally which can raise them from their suffering, wounded state.<sup>30</sup>

**Heal** – To transition from an unhealthy or injured state to a healthier, uninjured state. Merriam- Webster defines *heal* as, “To make free from injury or disease: to make sound or whole; to make well again: to restore to health; to cause (an undesirable condition) to be overcome; to restore to original purity or integrity.”<sup>31</sup> To heal does not necessitate returning to the precise state of health experienced before the loss of health or injury occurred. Rather, to heal might mean creating a new standard of

---

29. Merriam-Webster Dictionary s.v. “shame,” accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>.

30. The author recognizes that “atonement,” and more specifically the Atonement of Jesus Christ, has distinct definitions and significance in different cultures, faiths, and religions. For the purposes of this guide, when using a Latter-day Saint approach for defining “atonement” it is distinguished with a capital “A” (e.g., the Atonement of Jesus Christ). Other uses of “atonement” (lower-case “a”) will denote either a general use of the term or general Christian definition of the term.

31. Merriam-Webster Dictionary s.v. “heal,” accessed January 31, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heal>.

health or function that constitutes greater wholeness than in the injured state that is different than the standard of health before the loss or injury was sustained (e.g., hemorrhaging and pain ceases, yet scar tissue remains; a sense of guilt diminishes, but memories remain).<sup>32</sup>

---

32. See Stephen Joseph, *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 103–106. Joseph's "theory of the shattered vase" depicts a similar perspective on healing utilizing the imagery of a broken vase and its repairs as a mode of explanation.

## Section 1 – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Moral Injury

PTSD research is a vast discipline with over thirty-five years of published material. However, moral injury is not necessarily a subset of PTSD, and therefore only a limited amount of the literature is incorporated in this section to demonstrate how moral injury is situated within the broader clinical field. In recent years, moral injury has become an increasingly popular topic of study and publication due to ongoing developments in conceptualization and treatment. This section contains portions of the ever-expanding literature on moral injury.

### Historical Predecessors of PTSD

The nomenclature for negative responses to traumatic events—particularly as they pertain to war—has multiple antecedents to the 1980 development of PTSD. After almost every war in the twentieth-century, there has been a new syndrome or diagnosis created to try to explain what a veteran of war is experiencing.<sup>33</sup> However, long before the early 1900s there were terms being used to describe reactions to combat trauma. Some contemporary mental health professionals have suggested that dealing with war related trauma and its adverse effects can even be seen in ancient cultures through literature like the Greek writings of Homer in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>34</sup> A more recent historic example is seen in the work of Josef Leopold, an eighteenth century Austrian physician, who observed what he called “nostalgia” in soldiers exposed to combat trauma manifest by

---

33. Edgar Jones, “Historical Approaches to Post-Combat Disorders,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 361 (March 24, 2006): 541.

34. See Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*; Shay, *Odysseus in America*; Tick, *War and the Soul*).

their experiences of homesickness, trouble sleeping, anxiety, and sorrow.<sup>35</sup> As another example predating the twentieth-century, Dr. Jacob Mendez Da Costa realized that injured American Civil War soldiers often exhibited an elevated pulse, issues with breathing, and anxiety, indicators of what was then called “Soldier’s heart.”<sup>36</sup>



Shuman, *World War II Pursuit*, Signal Corps Photo: 161-43-4081, September 13, 1943, Uploaded October 25, 2011, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/6280067228/historical.jpg>

After the turn of the century, combat exposure during the Great War caused the terminology to shift to “shell shock,” and “war neuroses” as veterans experienced fright, trouble sleeping, perceived brain damage, and close proximity to exploding artillery.<sup>37</sup> Shortly after the war, the concept of “shell shock” was deliberated among political, military, and medical professionals, particularly regarding its similarities and differences to “cowardice” in war.<sup>38</sup> It was becoming more apparent that

35. Matthew J. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5”, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/history-of-ptsd-vets.asp>.

36. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5”; Jones, “Historical Approaches to Post- Combat Disorders,” 535.

37. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5.”

38. Ted Bogacz, “War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-22:

the exposure to and experience of combat stress, particularly in modern warfare, was taking an emotional and psychological toll on service members. During World War II, an American specialist in neurology and psychiatry named Roy Grinker studied a new wave of combat veterans experiencing “war neurosis,” which he and his colleague interpreted to be “mental breakdown using the psychoanalytic notions of repression, regression and ego defense mechanisms, the last of which, in response to the extraordinary stresses of battle.”<sup>39</sup> By the end of World War II several service members were considered to have experienced this “war neuroses” or “battle fatigue,” with some veterans being diagnosed with Combat Stress Reaction (CSR) as a result of the exhaustion accompanied with the long engagements and tempo of the war.<sup>40</sup> In short, prior to the post-Vietnam War era of psychiatry and psychology in which the PTSD construct was developed, manifestation of adverse reactions to combat trauma from war (i.e., anxiety, stress, mental and emotional debilitation, physiological distress, etc.) have led to the creation and use of many different names to describe the phenomenon.

## The Importance of Trauma and the Development of PTSD

All the above-mentioned designations are based on observations of the same issue: an adverse reaction to traumatic material in war. The term “trauma” originates from Greek—originally meaning “wound”—and in modern use refers to distressing experiences which can cause physical, mental, and The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into ‘Shell-Shock’,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 2, Studies on War (April 1989), 227–256.

39. Hans Pols, “The Tunisian Campaign, War Neuroses, and the Reorientation of American Psychiatry During World War II,” *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 19, no. 6 (2011): 315–316.

40. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5.”

emotional injuries, often disrupting normal corporeal, psychological, or emotive functioning.<sup>41</sup> Although trauma is not unique to war, it is almost inarguably associated with combat. On this notion, Dr. Matthew J. Friedman, MD, PhD observes that,

different people appear to have different trauma thresholds, some more protected from and some more vulnerable to developing clinical symptoms after exposure to extremely stressful situations. Although there is currently a renewed interest in subjective aspects of traumatic exposure, it must be emphasized that events such as rape, torture, genocide, and severe war zone stress are experienced as traumatic events by nearly everyone.<sup>42</sup>



Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Summer M. Anderson, Iraq, U.S. Navy photo, October 19, 2007, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/1634665291/importance.jpg>

---

41. Merriam-Webster Dictionary s.v. “trauma,” accessed March 14, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma>.

42. Matthew J. Friedman, “PTSD History and Overview,” accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/ptsd-overview.asp>. In Oxford University Press’s *Anxiety, A Very Short Introduction*, another list of traumatic events linked to the development of PTSD is offered and includes: “serious traffic accidents, sexual assault, physical attack, violent robbery or mugging, the sudden death of a loved one, military combat, torture, natural disasters, and being diagnosed with a potentially fatal illness.” See Daniel Freeman and Jason Freeman, *Anxiety: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 104.

Regarding traumatic events such as these, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, MD perceives trauma as not merely an event in time, but something which has an “imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present.”

<sup>43</sup>Trauma also “results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think.”<sup>44</sup> In addition to these psychological facets of responding to trauma, Dr. Johnathan Shay observes that there is a “moral dimension of trauma” which “destroys virtue” and “undoes good character.”<sup>45</sup>

After experiencing trauma, the people who have been effected by what has happened perceive, process, and cope with their experiences differently. The different reactions to trauma became a central component to the development of PTSD. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’s National Center for PTSD explains the development of PTSD as follows:

In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) nosologic classification scheme (2). Although controversial when first introduced, the PTSD diagnosis has filled an important gap in psychiatric theory and practice. From an historical perspective, the significant change ushered in by the PTSD concept was the stipulation that the etiological agent was outside the individual (i.e., a traumatic

---

43. Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 21.

44. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 21.

45. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 37.

event) rather than an inherent individual weakness (i.e., a traumatic neurosis). The key to understanding the scientific basis and clinical expression of PTSD is the concept of “trauma.”<sup>46</sup>

Within DSM-III, the diagnosis of “Post-traumatic Stress Disorder” was placed under the category of “Anxiety Disorders” with identifiers of being an acute, chronic, or delayed condition.<sup>47</sup>



Staff Sgt. Jason Robertson, Iraq, U.S. Air Force photo, March 5, 2008, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/2357605259/importance 2.jpg>

In the next three editions of the DSM published by the American Psychiatric Association PTSD continued to be considered an Anxiety Disorder with changes being made to the description, data, and diagnostic criteria related to the condition.<sup>48</sup>

---

46. Friedman, “PTSD History and Overview.”

47. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980), 236–238.

48. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition, revised (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987), 247–251; American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 393, 424–429; American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, text revision (Arlington, VA: American Psy-



A significant shift in the perception of PTSD became apparent in the 2013 publishing of DSM-V which identifies the disorder as a “Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorder” rather than categorizing it with “Anxiety Disorders” as had been done in past decades.<sup>49</sup> Part of the justification for this shift of classification is that, “PTSD is sometimes associated with other mood states (for example, depression) and with angry or reckless behavior rather than anxiety.”<sup>50</sup> Dr. Matthew J. Friedman specifies other symptoms which must be present for a month or longer and disrupt daily functioning for diagnosis, which include: “reliving the traumatic event (also called re- experiencing or intrusion); avoiding situations that are reminders of the event; negative changes in beliefs and feelings; and feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal or over-reactive to situations).”<sup>51</sup>

## Treatment for Trauma and PTSD

As a predecessor to labeling and classifying adverse reactions to trauma is a person’s experience of a traumatic event. Within DSM-V, a few of the explicitly stated events which might lead to a PTSD diagnosis include, “exposure to war as a combatant or civilian, threatened or actual physical assault... threatened or actual sexual violence... being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack... [and] natural or human-made disasters.”<sup>52</sup> Of these experiences, research on war veterans’ experiences has always been central to the development and changes of a PTSD diagnosis, and therefore the history of what is now chiatric Association, 2000), 429, 463–468.

49. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition, 265, 271–280.

50. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5.”

51. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5.”

52. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition, 274.

known as PTSD often references combat history.”<sup>53</sup> This research has led development of many therapeutic treatment models for healing trauma, which include: limbic system therapy, integrating traumatic memories, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), desensitization, medication (e.g., SSRIs), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and yoga.<sup>54</sup> Most of these treatment models primarily focus on the psychological or physiological facets of PTSD and PTSD recovery. Other areas to consider when someone is seeking healing from a traumatic event are the “moral and social” aspects of life.<sup>55</sup> One method for this kind of healing is to communalize the trauma narratives and grief of both combat veterans and the communities they live in after war.<sup>56</sup> In his book *Odysseus in America*, Johnathan Shay suggests there be a “communal ritual with religious force,” as a method of purification for soldiers who have shed blood, emphasizing that the “rituals *must* be communal with the returning veterans, not something done to or for them before they return to civilian life.”<sup>57</sup> These rituals don’t have to be “religious” per se, but ought to be a “secular variant” similar to the purification rituals used by religions and made “available for those who have no religion or have left the one they were born into.”<sup>58</sup>

The above-mentioned information provides a brief description of the development of PTSD and its current standing in health professions. As a final thought, the healing and coping processes for PTSD deal with the symptoms expressed by an individual in reaction to the trauma experienced. Dr. Bessel van

---

53. Friedman, “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5.”

54. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 206–229, 250–278.

55. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 187.

56. This is a main premise of Johnathan Shay in *Achilles in Vietnam*.

57. Shay, *Odysseus in America*, 244–245.

58. Shay, *Odysseus in America*, 300. See Note 9.

der Kolk keenly notes:

Nobody can ‘treat’ a war, or abuse, rape, molestation, or any other horrendous event, for that matter; what has happened cannot be undone. But what can be dealt with are the imprints of the trauma on body, mind, and soul: the crushing sensations in your chest that you may label as anxiety or depression; the fear of losing control; always being on alert for danger or rejection; the self-loathing; the nightmares and flashbacks; the fog that keeps you from staying on task and from engaging fully in what you are doing; being unable to fully open your heart to another human being.<sup>59</sup>

In this process, better recovery and healing will likely result when “healing is done by survivors, not to survivors.”<sup>60</sup>

### Differentiating PTSD and Moral Injury

Although some of this is discussed within the moral injury literature, in transitioning from PTSD to moral injury within this review it is important to know some of the key differences between the two concepts. This is important because the current “constructs of PTSD and moral injury overlap,” yet “each has unique components that make them separable consequences of war and other traumatic contexts.”<sup>61</sup> First, this leads to a notable similarity in that experiencing or being exposed to war or trauma can be a factor in a person’s development of both PTSD and moral injury.<sup>62</sup> A major difference is that “PTSD is a men-

---

59. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 205.

60. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 187.

61. Maguen and Litz, “Moral Injury in the Context of War.”

62. Nathan R. Stein, et al., “A Scheme for Categorizing Traumatic Military

tal disorder that requires diagnosis,” whereas, “moral injury is a dimensional problem—there is no threshold for the presence of moral injury,” meaning a veteran can exhibit mild to severe symptoms at any time.<sup>63</sup> Another difference between them are that a transgression of moral belief is not required for a PTSD diagnosis, and the diagnosis criteria within DSM-V does not “sufficiently capture moral injury (shame, self-handicapping, guilt, etc.).”<sup>64</sup>

To summarize, the framework for moral injury has “PTSD-like symptoms (e.g., intrusions, avoidance, numbing),” while also having other unique symptoms such as “shame, guilt, demoralization, self-handicapping behaviors (e.g., self-sabotaging relationships,) and self-harm (e.g., parasuicidal behaviors).”<sup>65</sup> The concepts of transgression, shame, guilt, and other criteria or symptoms specific to moral injury that have been specified over the last decade are explained further following a review of historic predecessors to the current era of moral injury research.



Sgt. 1st Class John D. Brown, *Observation tower*, U.S. Army photo, March 13, 2013, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/8572641650/.differentiating.jpg>

---

Events,” *Behavior Modification* 36, no. 6 (2012): 787–807.

63. Maguen and Litz, “Moral Injury in the Context of War.”

64. Maguen and Litz, “Moral Injury in the Context of War.”

65. Shira Maguen and Brett Litz, “Moral Injury in Veterans of War,” *PTSD Research Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2012): 1.

## Historical Predecessors of the Current Moral Injury Construct

William P. Nash, MD et al. 2013 observe, “The idea that psychological injury can result from transgressions of deeply held moral and ethical beliefs and expectations is far from new.”<sup>66</sup> Before Brett Litz et al. 2009 published an article providing a working definition for moral injury and a call to increase dialogue on the subject and its treatment, other professionals were observing moral wounds associated with war and traumatic events, both historically contemporarily. In conceptualizing the perpetration of morality in both history and modern times, Johnathan Shay observed:

No single English word takes in the whole sweep of a culture’s definition of right and wrong; we use terms such as moral order, convention, normative expectations, ethics, and commonly understood social values. The ancient Greek word that Homer used, *thémis*, encompasses all these meanings. A word of this scope is needed for the betrayals experienced by Vietnam combat veterans.<sup>67</sup>

As a result, Dr. Shay used the term “what’s right” to describe *thémis* in Modernity, adding that regardless of its name it has been violated by acts of war for thousands of years.<sup>68</sup>

Regarding trauma in war and its relationship to “what’s right,” Dr. Shay not only asked a crucial question but offered a response decades ahead of its time based on his experience in

---

66. William P. Nash et al., “Psychometric Evaluation of the Moral Injury Events Scale,” *Military Medicine* 178, no. 6 (June 2013): 646–647.

67. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 5.

68. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 5.

counseling with Vietnam veterans. He wrote:

Is betrayal of ‘what’s right’ essential to combat trauma, or is betrayal simply one of many terrible things that happen in war? Aren’t terror, shock, horror, and grief at the death of friends trauma enough? No one can conclusively answer these questions today. However... *moral injury* is an essential part of any combat trauma that leads to lifelong psychological injury. Veterans can usually recover from horror, fear, and grief once they return to civilian life, so long as ‘what’s right’ has not also been violated.”<sup>69</sup>

Johnathan Shay used the term “moral injury” within the genre of combat-related trauma research which at the time did not commonly weigh in on morality as a factor. Then, in his 2000 publication of *Odysseus in America*, Shay purposefully sought for discovering and implementing preventative measures for psychological wounds and “moral injury in military service members.”<sup>70</sup>

Despite some effort by Dr. Shay and a few contemporaries between the 1980s and early 2000s, little attention was subsequently given to “moral conflict” related to trauma in combat veterans.<sup>71</sup> However, research on morality and other related topics (e.g., guilt) which PTSD diagnostic criteria did not fully address were not entirely absent during this period. Multiple articles were published during the decades which followed

---

69. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 20, emphasis added.

70. Shay, *Odysseus in America*, 5; A more detailed and updated writing on Johnathan Shay’s perceptions of moral injury are found in Johnathan Shay, “Moral Injury,” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 31, no. 2 (2014): 182–191.

71. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 696.

the DSM adoption of PTSD,<sup>72</sup> but the issue of how combat and combat-related traumatic experiences effected a person's moral senses were not approached in a definitive way. In his 2005 publication *War and the Soul*, Dr. Edward Tick—a clinical psychotherapist experienced in counseling war veterans—described how PTSD diagnosis and therapy models were missing the mark in relation to the moral and spiritual aspects of life and modern warfare.<sup>73</sup> Only a few years later the subject of moral dissonance resulting from experiences in military service became a serious topic of research and study by professionals from multiple fields.

### What is Moral Injury?<sup>74</sup>

In 2009, Dr. Brett Litz—clinical psychologist, professor, and leading Veterans Affairs researcher on the effects of trauma in war veterans—and others addressed the issue that “service members are confronted with numerous moral and ethical challenges.”<sup>75</sup> With moral and ethical trials being typical of military

---

72. A few examples include: Kris R. Henning and B. Christopher Frueh, “Combat Guilt and Its Relationship to PTSD Symptoms,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 53, no. 8 (December 1997): 801–808; Patrick J. Bracken, “Post-Modernity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *Social Science and Medicine* 53, no. 6 (2001): 733–743; Hanna Kienzler, “Debating War-Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena,” *Social Science and Medicine* 67, no. 2 (2008): 218–227.

73. Tick, *War and the Soul*, 108–110, 169–171.

74. Sheila Frankfurt and Patricia Frazier, “A Review of Research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans,” *Military Psychology* 28, no. 5 (2016): 318–330 is a recently published, succinct review of moral injury literature and is recommended for supplementary reading. Also, Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015) contains many similar elements of this portion of the guide, to include multiple stories of service members who experienced moral injury during the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

75. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 696.

service, especially in combat situations, even best-case scenarios may produce difficult decision-making moments which transgress the thoughts and beliefs which a person may possess. In their article, Litz et al. 2009 proposed that a working definition for *moral injury* be given, initially describing it as “perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”<sup>76</sup> To further portray what this meant, it was suggested that moral injury could “entail participating in or witnessing inhumane or cruel actions, failing to prevent the immoral acts of others, as well as engaging in subtle acts or experiencing reactions that, upon reflection, transgress a moral code.”<sup>77</sup> Additionally, according to Litz et al. 2009, “Moral injury requires an act of transgression that severely and abruptly contradicts an individual’s personal or shared expectations about the rules or the code of conduct, either during the event or at some point afterwards.”<sup>78</sup> Under these definitions almost anyone, civilian or member of the armed forces, is at risk for receiving a moral injury, likely due to the fact that morality is not an exclusive ideal or concept unique and limited to service members. Everyone has “moral emotions, both self- focused and other-focused” which “serve to maintain a moral code.”<sup>79</sup> This means that morality is universal, but does not guarantee that the morals believed or lived by all people are universally applied or agreed upon.

---

76. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700; Alison Flipse Vargas, et al., “Moral Injury Themes in Combat Veterans’ Narrative Responses From the National Vietnam Veterans’ Readjustment Study,” *Traumatology* 19, no. 3 (2013): 243 notes that coining the term “moral injury” was done as “an effort to capture the complex psychological, social, and spiritual effects of ethical and moral challenges...”

77. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700.

78. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 700.

79. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 699.



Regarding morality in society, it has been suggested that, “To be civilized, construction of societies must be based on moral covenants that are taught from an early age, reinforced continuously, and repaired as much as possible when broken. Religion and secular law have shaped moral codes since the dawn of civilized man and continue to play key roles in their enforcement.”<sup>80</sup> This would suggest that most service members have been cultured and accustomed to a set of moral beliefs based on their individual and unique backgrounds and upbringings prior to their military service. What makes the morality of a service member unique is that they do not always live in a regular society, but instead are warriors and may need to live, survive, and thrive in war zone situations, all while executing a job to support, sustain, and engage in combat operations. These unique situations might “fundamentally alter their previously held beliefs and values about themselves, humanity, and the larger world.”<sup>81</sup>



Spec. Luther Boothe, Jr., *Operation Sky Steel*, December 22, 2010, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/5319445537/in/photostream/moral injury 1.jpg](https://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/5319445537/in/photostream/moral%20injury%201.jpg)

---

80. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 37.

81. Joseph M. Currier, Jason M. Holland, and Jesse Malott, “Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 71, no. 3 (2015): 236.

In this setting, it is not always the soldier who is supposed to decide or even worry about whether their actions are moral or not. Rather, they are trained to trust in and believe that their leaders' orders are morally correct. Dr. Edward Tick observes, "In ancient and modern times, from the Bible to the Geneva Conventions to George Bush redefining 'torture' and Barack Obama justifying drone aircraft killings, political leaders have dictated moral and immoral uses of force and violence."<sup>82</sup> The stakes are high in these situations. If a high-ranking national or military leader is unjust, abusive, or errant in their judgment or decision making, the effects are devastating on multiple levels. After all, "*there are no private wrongs in the abuse of military authority*. In some instances the moral fabric of the whole service is damaged, and the trust and respect of the nation are impaired."<sup>83</sup> On this wise, "the vulnerability of the soldier's moral world has increased," over time because of the increased number of people who are influential yet physically distant from situations which "threaten the survival of soldiers," that could betray moral norms.<sup>84</sup> As a result, members of the armed forces often engage in acts which, according to their leaders, may be moral. However, when compared to personally held moral beliefs shaped by a unique and individual past, service members may be acting correctly according to what they were trained to do but at the expense of violating their personal philosophies of morality.

This, in part, is why service members are trained the way they are, by following the adage of being torn down and then rebuilt to the standards of their service branch. Dr. Tick writes

---

82. Edward Tick, *Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2014), 70.

83. Shay, *Odysseus in America*, 224.

84. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 187.

that, “Warriorhood is a state of mind, heart, and spirit matched with a set of practical and physical arts that include knowledge and training in how to kill and are guided in action by a high moral code, used to protect one’s people, homes, and highest values, and meant to serve and preserve life.”<sup>85</sup> America’s warriors live in a realm where they have to balance distinctive moral codes—those embedded within them from their societal, familial, and cultural upbringing—with those necessary to be in military service and perform their duties that support war efforts. Furthermore, each branch of service in the military has its own culture, norms, and values. Dr. Shay writes,

Any army, ancient or modern, is a social construction defined by shared expectations and values. Some of these are embodied in formal regulations, defined authority, written orders, ranks, incentives, punishments, and formal task and occupational definitions. Others circulate as traditions, archetypal stories of things to be emulated or shunned, and accepted truth about what is praiseworthy and what is culpable. All together, these form a moral world that most of the participants most of the time regard as legitimate, ‘natural,’ and personally binding. The moral power of an army is so great that it can motivate men to get up out of a trench and step into enemy machine-gun fire.<sup>86</sup>

Dr. Tick further describes this “warrior soul” as the part of a person that “wishes to serve with honor for moral purpose.”<sup>87</sup> The violations of these moral codes and purposes are what may result in moral injury. For example, Dr. Tick describes from his

---

85. Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, 15.

86. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 6.

87. Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, 14.

counseling experience that, “Almost all the veterans with whom I have worked, regardless of the purpose of the war in which they were involved, have agonized over the question of whether the killing they did was or was not murder.”<sup>88</sup> This disconnect and questioning of whether one’s actions were justifiable or correct is a form of moral injury, and these injuries ought not to come as a surprise or be looked at as an abnormal reaction to combat. In other words, “Since ‘war is hell’ and veterans are people who have returned from the diabolical realm, soul wounding is not only inevitable but also proof of the warrior’s humanity. After surviving hell, can we expect ‘normalcy’?”<sup>89</sup> This question about “normalcy” generates additional questions. For example, what is “normal,” and is a return to such a state, if one ever existed, truly the goal for growth and healing when something like moral injury occurs? These questions may be difficult to answer, and it is perhaps for that reason that addressing moral repair and healing might not be a simple or easy task.

One of the most recent publications on moral injury has stated that, “Morally injurious experiences are among the most psychologically toxic and avoided topics (for both therapists and patients).”<sup>90</sup> These are the results of the following observation:

Many care providers in the military and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have not adequately considered the unique cultural and contextual elements of military trauma, the phenomenology of service members’ lived experience, or the clinical issues that arise from combat operational stressors, such as traumatic loss and experiences that are morally compromising.

---

88. Tick, *War and the Soul*, 275.

89. Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, 154.

90. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 117.

Too often clinicians assume that life-threatening war zone experiences are necessary and sufficient to explain their patients' experiences and what requires redressing in therapy. They are at risk for failing to realize the contribution of military features, such as leader actions or the quality of connections to unit members.<sup>91</sup>



Staff Sgt. Krista D'Gregorio, Platoon Leader, 82nd Airborne Division, September 1, 2012, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.dick.com/photos/35703170/N001543163862\\_moral\\_injury\\_2.jpg](https://www.dick.com/photos/35703170/N001543163862_moral_injury_2.jpg)

A reason proposed for this lack of attention is “that clinicians and researchers who work with service members and veterans focus most of their attention on the impact of life-threat trauma, failing to pay sufficient attention to the impact of events with moral and ethical implications.”<sup>92</sup> However, the “transgression experience is as haunting as life-threatening and loss experienc-

---

91. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 7.

92. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 696.

es are, and it wittingly pervades consciousness.”<sup>93</sup> These observations have led to studies attempting to specify and categorize morally injurious events in recent years.<sup>94</sup>

Another reason for this lack of attention might be because moral injury is comparable to, or in a way reflects, PTSD.<sup>95</sup> In a recent interview, Dr. Brett Litz defined moral injury as “an experience that reflects a transgression of deeply held beliefs,” with “some PTSD-like manifestations” such as being haunted by or re-experiencing in some way a triggering event.<sup>96</sup> Some differences observed by healthcare professionals between moral injury and PTSD are that “moral injury is expected to lead to anomie, pervasive shame and guilt, reductions in trust in self- and others in terms of moral behavior (*a broken moral compass*), poor self-care, self-harming and self-handicapping behaviors, loss of faith in God (if applicable), and in the case of betrayal-based experiences, externalizing, blaming, and aggressive acting-out behavior.”<sup>97</sup> Service members may experience symptoms that are not on the PTSD diagnosis criteria list such as a “change in or loss of spirituality” or “guilt, shame, and forgiveness

---

93. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 21–22.

94. Joseph M. Currier, et al., “Initial Psychometric Evaluation of the Moral Injury Questionnaire—Military Version,” *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy* 22, no. 1 (2015): 54–63; Joseph M. Currier, Wesley McCormick, and Kent D. Dresher, “How Do Morally Injurious Events Occur? A Qualitative Analysis of Perspectives of Veterans With PTSD,” *Traumatology* 21, no. 2 (June 2015): 106–116.

95. Brett T. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans,” 696–699; Brett T. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 21.

96. “Moral Injury” (podcast-transcript), Radio Health Journal featuring Dr. Brett Litz and Dr. William Nash, January 18, 2015, accessed March 20, 2017, <https://radiohealthjournal.wordpress.com/2015/01/18/15-03-story-1-moral-injury/#more-273>.

97. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 22.

problems.”<sup>98</sup> As mentioned previously, some manifestations or wounds of moral injury such as guilt have more recently been studied in connection to PTSD, trauma, and combat exposure or experience and not necessarily under the nomenclature of moral injury studies.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the classification of guilt as something experienced in relation to moral injury is becoming the more widely accepted construct.

It has been suggested that “troops and veterans will judge their commanders from squad leader up to the president and to the Divine on whether or not they ordered moral service.”<sup>100</sup> Although this may not be true of all service members, it is worth considering, along with the moral implications other actions will have on individuals who give military service. It should also be considered that some people may hold “distorted beliefs about moral violation events that cause the ensuing misery,” rather than truth based, legitimate experiences.<sup>101</sup> It has been observed that “in the case of morally injurious combat and operational experiences, there are instances in which judgments and beliefs about the transgressions may be appropriate and accurate, psychologically toxic and excruciating.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, moral injury is a necessary and relevant concept to consider—even in its early stages of research and development—when addressing service members and veterans who may have experienced transgressing events during their military service.

---

With regard to moral injury, it is worth considering what

98. Drescher et al., “An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans,” 9.

99. An example is Henning and Frueh, “Combat Guilt and Its Relationship to PTSD Symptoms,” 801–808.

100. Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, 94.

101. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 13.

102. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 13.

Dr. Edward Tick has written, stating that “the soul at war is characteristically distorted along all its essential functions: how it locates itself in the cosmos and identifies with moral and spiritual principles, how it views the everyday workings of the world and processes and evaluates experiences, and what its relationship is to its own instincts and the ultimate principles of life and death.”<sup>103</sup> Even with this distortion, it should not be forgotten that “unless damaged by moral injury, warriors tend to have highly developed moral identities.”<sup>104</sup>



Master Sgt. Andy Dunaway, *Iraq*, U.S. Air Force photo, March 12, 2007, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacent/478415299/moral\\_injury\\_3.jpg](https://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacent/478415299/moral_injury_3.jpg)

## Spiritual Considerations of Moral Injury

Now, in order to more fully understand what morals may be compromised by a war related experience, it is important to consider the spiritual and religious ideologies of service members due to the “increasing spiritual diversity of the U.S. Armed Forces”.<sup>105</sup> A few reasons why that it is important to view mor-

103. Tick, *War and the Soul*, 285.

104. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 37.

105. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 73.



al injury with respect to spirituality are, first, the majority of United States service members believe in a higher power, and secondly, the stigma with seeking help from a spiritual leader, such as a chaplain, is lower than other medical or mental health professionals making it more likely for a service member to go to a spiritual leader for help.<sup>106</sup> Chaplains are already regarded as a positive force in healing psychologically and spiritually after trauma, and as moral injury continues to be acknowledged as a “contributor to mental health issues,” it is beneficial to continue or create cooperative relationships between chaplains and mental health professionals who can both help in the healing process.<sup>107</sup>

Additionally, in the August 2010 issue of *Military Medicine* it was reported that “the danger of spiritual and moral trauma is real, and it can initiate a downward spiral of physical, psychological, and behavioral problems in the service members.”<sup>108</sup> In these cases, military chaplains are especially helpful. Therefore, in order to preserve high levels of overall fitness for service members the spiritual components of life ought to be considered because many of the morals and values of service members are based in spiritual or religious theological schemas

---

106. J. Irene Harris et al., “Moral Injury and Psycho-Spiritual Development: Considering the Developmental Context,” *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 2, no. 4 (2015): 2–3.

107. Lindsay B. Carey, et al., “Moral Injury, Spiritual Care and the Role of Chaplains: An Exploratory Scoping Review of Literature and Resources,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 4 (August 2016):1218, 1237; Rachel L. Seddon, Edgar Jones, and Neil Greenburg, “The Role of Chaplains in Maintaining the Psychological Health of Military Personnel: An Historical and Contemporary Perspective,” *Military Medicine* 176, no. 12 (December 2011): 1357–1361.

108. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 73.

and can be deeply rooted within one's character.<sup>109</sup>

Having a religious or spiritual approach to life is beneficial for people, enhancing their sense of purpose and understanding of the world. However, in the context of war it may contribute to added amounts of stress to do what is thought to be right when given an order. For example, Dr. Tick writes about how beliefs and perspective derived from the Judeo-Christian culture could become troublesome:

The giving of life and the taking of life are sacred acts. Whenever we participate in these processes, we intrude on powers beyond our own, powers before which we must be utterly humble and which we must approach with utmost care. If and when we take life, our reasons must be transcendent, so completely in line with a higher moral and spiritual purpose that they do not cause us to break the original meaning of the Sixth Commandment.<sup>110</sup>

In this context, a service member may be having difficulty determining if the killing they engaged in during war violated their moral beliefs.

A moral challenge such as this is not exclusive to Judeo-Christian religious traditions. Regardless of a person's religious or spiritual preference, war related experiences can impact or challenge a moral code of beliefs. This is because "in combat situations, perpetrating, failing to prevent, or witnessing acts that transgress deeply held values can shatter an individual's beliefs about the purpose and meaning of life, challenge belief in

109. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, "Spiritual Fitness," 76.

110. Tick, *War and the Soul*, 274.

God, induce moral conflict, and even precipitate an existential crisis.”<sup>111</sup> Although this kind of moral dissonance might not occur in every service member, it is advantageous to strengthen service member’s spiritual fitness in order to help build resiliency against these types of morally injurious events.



Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell, Afghanistan Sunset, U.S. Army photo, March 17, 2011, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/35703177@N00/5546840483/spiritual-moral-injury.jpg>

For example, as a result of being spiritually strong it is reported that a person may increase their hope and longevity, strengthen marital stability, and decrease the risks of depression, suicide, anxiety, and substance abuse.<sup>112</sup> This added measure of strength is beneficial in guarding against “guilt, shame, difficulty forgiving self and others, changes in or losses of spiritual or religious belief, difficulty trusting self or others to act morally,” and, “loss of a sense of meaning or purpose,” which often result as effects of moral injury.<sup>113</sup> Dr. Edward Tick has found through his experience that, “Invisible war wounds occur to body, mind, heart, soul, spirit, culture, and earth... They are as real as visible

---

111. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 76.

112. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 79.

113. J. Irene Harris et al., “Moral Injury and Psycho-Spiritual Development,” 2.

wounds and can sometimes be even more debilitating.”<sup>114</sup>

## Types of Moral Injury and Examples of Morally Injurious Events

Moral injury, a type of invisible wound, is not exclusive to Dr. Tick’s observation. In the study “Twentieth- century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown” it is observed that since World War I militaries “have recognized the reality and challenge of psychiatric breakdown... seen by the military as in part a moral issue.”<sup>115</sup> Modern militaries adhere to an unwritten code that if the breakdown comes as a result of serious combat experience then it is acceptable, but if it is not the result of intense combat experience then the soldier may receive “little in understanding or compassion.”<sup>116</sup> This lack of compassion for those who may need to seek help for an invisible wound such as moral injury can shift to empathy when the causes of moral injury are better understood.

Recent research has grouped morally injurious events into “two broad categories of war- related moral injury: perpetration and betrayal-based injuries.”<sup>117</sup> There are some experiences in war which may cause overlap with these groupings, and qualitative analyses are being conducted to better understand the impact specific events have on an individual.<sup>118</sup> The perpetra-

114. Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, 166.

115. Simon Wessely, “Twentieth-Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 2 (April 2006): 284.

116. Wessely, “Twentieth-Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown,” 284.

117. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 117.

118. Currier, McCormick, and Drescher, “How Do Morally Injurious Event Occur? A Qualitative Analysis of Perspectives of Veterans with PTSD,”

tion-based wounds typically result from “relevant events and experiences [that] range from the actual perpetration of acts of unnecessary or capricious violence to perceived acts of commission or omission that violate the service member’s or veteran’s sense of honor and duty.”<sup>119</sup> In other words, these are the morally injurious events that are a result of the use of the autonomy of a service member to act or not act in a given situation.

The betrayal-based wounds of war-related moral injury usually result from having morals infringed by a leader or authority figure. Brett T. Litz et al. 2016 further describe this category, stating,

Betrayal experiences chiefly stem from leaders’ behaviors and judgements that are capricious, dangerous, and entail grossly unfair mistreatment. In other words, individuals violated expectations of moral and ethical conduct, with horrific consequences. The betrayal is also likely to be associated with no attendant redress or justice. Consequently, in this form of moral injury, the service member’s or veteran’s confidence in moral authority and moral structures is shaken, if not obliterated.<sup>120</sup>

Moral injury that results from betrayal is especially harmful, leading to “anger and overgeneralized irritability, blaming, expectations of injustice, acting-out, revenge fantasies, inability to forgive, and externalizing attributional bias (poor responsibility-taking).”<sup>121</sup> Both types of injuries (perpetration and betrayal) can lead a service member to feeling the distinguished reactions

---

109–114.

119. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 117.

120. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 122.

121. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 122.

that are often the results of moral injury, namely: guilt, shame, or rage.<sup>122</sup>

An example of guilt and shame ensuing morally injurious events are found in the case of “Mr. C” as described by Lisa A. Paul, PhD et al. 2014 in their article “Prolonged Exposure for Guilt and Shame in a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” which reads:

Mr. C is a 27-year-old, college-educated, OIF veteran who served as a member of the Army National Guard from 1999 to 2010. In 2008 he was deployed to Iraq, where he was a convoy gunner. Despite participating in more than 180 missions, Mr. C was never directly exposed to what he perceived as life-threatening combat. Rather, his distress centered on three specific events that elicited strong feelings of guilt and shame.

First, Mr. C reported almost shooting an innocent physically and mentally handicapped Iraqi boy during a patrol in a hostile area. The event took place in the same village where a day earlier 12 soldiers were killed by a grenade thrown by a child. The child Mr. C nearly shot was crouching behind a vehicle with an object in his hand. Mr. C reported that he later found out that the object was a rock, and was bothered throughout his deployment by thoughts related to the event: “What if I had pulled the trigger and killed an innocent boy?” and “I was in charge; what if the rock had been a grenade-all of my guys would be dead.”

---

Second, Mr. C reported failing to prevent an improvised

122. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 3.

explosive device (IED) detonation. Mr. C was ordered to inspect and advise regarding a suspected IED. He made the call that the road was clear and the convoy proceeded. Mr. C's convoy safely traversed the area; however, the convoy following them hit an IED, resulting in the death of two soldiers. Mr. C did not witness the event, but reported significant guilt related thoughts (e.g., "I could have stopped that from happening").

Third, Mr. C reported discovering his wife's extramarital affair and experiencing persistent concerns that she would leave him while he was in Iraq. After returning from the year-long deployment, Mr. C briefly reconciled with his wife, but they later divorced. He lost his job, and then moved to the southeastern United States to "start a new life." He reported a number of thoughts related to his relationship, including shame (e.g., "I'm worthless"), guilt ("I'm responsible that she left") and anger ("She lied, lied, lied!").<sup>123</sup>



Tyler Rickenbach, Untitled (Commissioning Ceremony), ca. June 2015, used with permission. types moral injury.jpg

---

123. Lisa A. Paul et al., "Prolonged Exposure for Guilt and Shame in a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 68, no. 3 (2014): 279–280.

## Treatment of Moral Injury

Decades ago Dr. Johnathan Shay extended an invitation for people to “learn *how* war damages the mind and spirit, and work to change those things in military institutions and culture that needlessly create or worsen these injuries.”<sup>124</sup> Since the Brett T. Litz et al. 2009 article on moral injury which offered a similar invitation, many clinicians, professors, pastoral care professionals, and others in recent years have worked to refine how this condition is viewed and ought to be treated. Despite advancements made in almost a decade of studies, evidence-based research on moral injury and moral injury treatment is “still in its infancy.”<sup>125</sup>



Spc. Breanne Pyc, Sunset Security, U.S. Army photo, January 31, 2011, accessed April 6, 2017, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/5418579692/in/photostream/moral injury treatment.jpg](https://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/5418579692/in/photostream/moral%20injury%20treatment.jpg)

Some general treatment recommendations that have been offered thus far include: seeking assistance from healthcare professionals and chaplains as needed, having realistic pre-deployment briefs as well as open discussions with leaders and families, and receiving appropriate debriefs following a morally injurious

124. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, xxiii.

125. Currier, Holland, and Malott, “Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans,” 238.



event during operations.<sup>126</sup> Ultimately, these recommendations and others divide into the following three categories: personal-psychological treatments, social-cultural treatments, and religious-spiritual treatments. Admittedly, the categories have some overlap, but for organizational and structuring purposes within this review they suffice.

***Personal-psychological Treatments.*** Shira Maguen, PhD and Brett Litz observe, “it is important to assess mental health symptoms and moral injury as separate manifestations of war trauma to form a comprehensive clinical picture, and provide the most relevant treatment.”<sup>127</sup> One suggested method for measurement of moral injury is a self-report tool known as the Moral Injury Events Scale developed and evaluated by William P. Nash et al. 2013.<sup>128</sup> The Moral Injury Events Scale offers insight into how an individual feels regarding perceived or experienced events of perpetration- or betrayal-based morally injurious events.

Clinically, two existent models of treatment for moral injury are becoming the prominent methods explored by psychologists. The first is *Impact of Killing in War* (IOK) which according to Shira Maguen and Brett T. Litz involves the following principles:

- Education about the complex interplay of the biopsychosocial aspects of killing in war that may cause inner conflict

---

126. Hufford, Fritts, and Rhodes, “Spiritual Fitness,” 77; Drescher et al., “An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans,” 11–12.

127. Maguen and Litz, “Moral Injury in the Context of War.”

128. Nash et al., “Psychometric Evaluation of the Moral Injury Events Scale,” 646–652.

and moral injury

- Identification of meaning elements and cognitive attributions related to killing in war.
- Self-forgiveness (which entails cognitive therapy and for some the promotion of spirituality or faith-based religious practices).
- Making amends tailored to the individual (this may include writing forgiveness letters and an action plan to start the process of making amends).<sup>129</sup>

Further reading and research about veterans' thoughts and emotions regarding killing are found in books like *On Killing: The Psychological Costs of Learning to Kill in War and Society* and *War and Redemption: Treatment and Recovery in Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, as well as the recently published article "Veterans' Perspectives on the Psychosocial Impact of Killing in War."<sup>130</sup>

The second method of treatment is known as Adaptive Disclosure (AD). Developed specifically for active-duty person-

129. Maguen and Litz, "Moral Injury in the Context of War."; Also, to better understand the concept of self-forgiveness, see Everett L. Worthington Jr. and Diane Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness in Treating Complex Trauma and Moral Injury in Present and Former Soldiers," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 40, no. 4 (2012): 282–285; AnnaBelle O. Bryan, Jaqueline L. Theriault, and Craig J. Bryan, "Self-Forgiveness, Posttraumatic Stress, and Suicide Attempts Among Military Personnel and Veterans," *Traumatology* 21, no. 1 (2015): 40–46.

130. David A. Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Costs of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, revised edition (New York, NY: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown, and Company, 2009); Larry Dewey, *War and Redemption: Treatment and Recovery in Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004); Natalie Purcell et al., "Veterans' Perspectives on the Psychosocial Impact of Killing in War," *The Counseling Psychologist* 44, no. 7 (2016): 1062–1099.

nel, the term itself purposefully avoids the nomenclature of a “therapy” and “treatment” in the hope that more service members become open to engaging in the “core goal,” of “sharing and processing memories of warzone experiences in a therapeutic manner.”<sup>131</sup> Shortly after its initial development the treatment approach was published for others to research and adopt in their practice “to help service members and veterans recover and heal from combat stress injuries and posttraumatic stress disorder,” by addressing three traumatic experiences of war: life threat, loss, and moral injury.<sup>132</sup> The processes of Adaptive Disclosure is summarized as follows:

- Exposure is used to uncover core features of focal combat and operational trauma and as a means of articulating the meaning and implication of these events.
- If the focal combat event is fear and life-threat-based, exposure is the sole approach.
- If the focal trauma is loss-based, patients are also asked to have an imaginary emotionally evocative real-time dialogue with the lost person.
- For moral injury, patients are guided through a dialogue with a forgiving and compassionate moral authority about the transgression.<sup>133</sup>

Clinical treatment methods for moral injury are still in the early stages of implementation for veterans to access. Aside from formal clinical treatment, it is possible that there are other treatment methods which could help promote healing moral

---

131. Matt J. Gray et al., “Adaptive Disclosure: An Open Trial of a Novel Exposure-Based Intervention for Service Members with Combat-Related Psychological Stress Injuries,” *Behavior Therapy* 43, no. 2 (2012): 409.

132. Litz, et al., *Adaptive Disclosure*, 1.

133. Maguen and Litz, “Moral Injury in the Context of War.”

wounds from war. For example, journaling—writing a personal narrative of life’s events either as they happen or afterward—brings moral repair.<sup>134</sup>

***Social-cultural Treatments.*** People do not exist in isolation, everyone is in some way connected to and effected by their social-cultural world (i.e., family, neighbors, friends, coworkers, etc.). Considering the interconnectivity of human beings, healing from moral injury and the negative aspects of war can also have social-cultural feature. For example, in ancient times there were “purification rituals” like Athenian theater productions by veterans, Aristotle’s *katharsis*, certain Roman ceremonies, and penance which were used as remedies to the purify and rid the guilt of a veteran who was reuniting with their community.<sup>135</sup> Modern ideas of helping a community aid their veterans have been suggested by clinicians like Edward Tick. Some of his ideas include: creating an environment respectful toward veterans, inviting veterans to participate in community activities or local school events, providing religious and educational support programs for veterans, and having veterans assist in community art programs or restoration projects.<sup>136</sup> Additionally, veterans like Karl Marlantes, MS have offered their insight on the importance of communal healing with groups of fellow veterans after war.<sup>137</sup>

A recent article by William P. Nash and Brett T. Litz describe how moral injury might impact a family and communi-

---

134. Edmonds, *God is Not Here: A Soldier’s Struggle with Torture, Trauma, and the Moral Injuries of War*, 18.

135. Shay, *Odysseus in America*, 4, 152–153.

136. Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, 157–161.

137. Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2011), 208–219.

ty.<sup>138</sup> Their proposal addresses the idea that moral injury might not just happen to or impact a service member, but family and community member morality might also be directly or indirectly effected by war.<sup>139</sup> Considering these possibilities, clinicians and community religious-spiritual leaders need to be observant of signs of moral injury in people other than just the service members directly involved offering help within their area of influence. One community-based, spiritually centered group therapy method being used for people suffering spiritual distress is Building Spiritual Strength (BSS).<sup>140</sup>

***Religious-spiritual Treatments.*** Johnathan Shay suggests that “medical-psychological therapies” repeatedly assist veterans in managing their guilt, “but they are not, and should not be, the only therapies available for moral pain. Religious and cultural therapies are not only possible, but may well be superior to what mental health professionals conventionally offer.”<sup>141</sup> Some psychotherapists believe that utilizing the “healing potential in the theistic world religions,” and “spiritual resources found in the theistic religious traditions,” could lead to more effective treatment.<sup>142</sup> This is likely the case with the Building

138. William P. Nash and Brett T. Litz, “Moral Injury: A Mechanism for War-Related Psychological Trauma in Military Family Members,” *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 16, no. 4 (December 2013): 365–375.

139. Nash and Litz, “Moral Injury: A Mechanism for War-Related Psychological Trauma in Military Family Members,” 369–371.

140. Frankfurt and Frazier, “A Review of Research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans,” 327.

141. Shay, *Odyssey in America*, 4, 152. An example of this kind of spiritually centered therapeutic model is seen in Chris Adsit, *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual: Christ-centered Solutions for Combat Trauma* (Newport News, VA: Military Ministry Press, 2007).

142. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2005), 7.

Spiritual Strength program mentioned in the previous section. Using religious principles to cope with negative life events can lead to better adjustment for individuals who utilize principles such as forgiveness or purification as well as help from religious leaders.<sup>143</sup>



Tyler Rickenbach, *Untitled (Ceremony)*, ca. 2015, used with permission.social cultural treatment.jpg

This notion of pastoral care is prevalent in military culture, for every unit has a chaplain assigned to them for that very purpose, which helps delay or prevent moral injury.<sup>144</sup> Dr. Edward Tick stated that “chaplains can and should play a special role in the recognition, evaluation, treatment and response to moral injury,” suggesting that like mental health workers, they could employ methods of spiritual evaluation in the event of

---

143. Kenneth I. Pargament, Harold G. Koenig, and Lisa M. Perez, “The Many Methods of Religious Coping: Development and Initial Validation of the RCOPE,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 58, no. 4 (April 200): 519–543.

144. In their book, *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic*, Wollom A. Jensen and James M. Childs, Jr. address at length the unique roles and challenges of military chaplain ministry, particularly as it pertains to conflicts with personal and cultural moral belief systems. See Wollom A. Jensen and James M. Childs, Jr., *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016).

moral injury.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, psychologists P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin recognize that “clergy and other pastoral professionals are front-line mental health workers... Chaplains and pastoral counselors receive a breadth of training in theology and religion that helps them work in respectful ways with people from a variety of religious-spiritual traditions.”<sup>146</sup> Part of pastoral care is to find religious or faith based “healing, sustaining or guiding,” for people who believe in a higher power and seek assistance from it for help.<sup>147</sup>

Another approach to spiritual healing is found in specific spiritual or religious principles. For example, within the field of psychology it has been observed that “forgiveness has been encouraged for thousands of years by major world religions. Adherents of these religions have claimed that forgiveness yields numerous emotional and spiritual benefits, and can dramatically transform one’s life.”<sup>148</sup> As an example of why and how the Christian interpretation of forgiveness is a beneficial vehicle for healing, James G. Williams, PhD wrote:

---

145. Edward Tick, “Military Service, Moral Injury, and Spiritual Wounding,” *The Military Chaplaincy* 89, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 8.

146. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, “Religious Diversity and Psychotherapy,” in *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*, 2nd edition, 485–486.

147. John Patton, “Forgiveness in Pastoral Care and Counseling,” in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 281–295, edited by Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000), 281.

148. Mark S. Rye, Kenneth I. Pargament, M. Amir Ali, Guy L. Beck, Elliot N. Dorff, Charles Hallisey, Vasudha Narayanan, and James G. Williams, “Religious Perspectives on Forgiveness,” in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 17–40, edited by Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000), 17; Articles pertaining to self-forgiveness mentioned previously in the “Personal-psychological Treatment” section (footnote 129) may also apply here.

Forgiveness is generally understood as *an act of pardon or release from an injury, offense, or debt*. On the part of the forgiving subject, *it entails having compassion*, releasing someone from any act or attitude that would impeded the relationship of those involved. On the part of the forgiven subject, *it usually entails showing signs of repentance for the wrong done and acts of contrition and love*, in keeping with the graciousness shown by the forgiver.<sup>149</sup>

Accordingly, some of the power of forgiveness appears to stem from an emotional connection between oneself and others.

Another religious principle which could offer healing for moral injury is found in atonement. Regarding moral wrongdoing, Linda Radzik, PhD—professor of philosophy at Texas A&M University—has explored multiple facets of atonement from both spiritual and secular perspectives to include how it might be a vehicle for reparation and recovery.<sup>150</sup> Tenets of atonement such as redemption, reconciliation, empathy, apology, forgiveness, and change explored by Radzik can be applicable as helpful methods of healing from moral injury. Using concepts like atonement in connection with moral injury can broaden the conversation on approaches outside of the mental health arena for healing. In the words of Chris J. Antal, DMin and Kathy Winings, EdD “Talk of sin, evil, and redemption moves us be-

---

149. Mark S. Rye, Kenneth I. Pargament, M. Amir Ali, Guy L. Beck, Elliot N. Dorff, Charles Hallisey, Vasudha Narayanan, and James G. Williams, “Religious Perspectives on Forgiveness,” in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 20–21, emphasis added.

150. Linda Radzik, *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–24.



yond the constraints of the medical construct of moral injury into a dimension that integrates the insights of theology and the resources of religious traditions...”<sup>151</sup>



Tyler Rickenbach, *BYU–Idaho Army ROTC Fall 2015 FTX*, October 2015, used with permission. religious spiritual treatments.jpg

---

151. Chris J. Antal and Kathy Winings, “Moral Injury, Soul Repair, and Creating a Place for Grace,” *Religious Education* 110, no. 4 (July–September 2015): 386.

## Section 2 – The Redemptive, Salvific Power of Jesus Christ

Considering the possibility of using theological insight from religions for healing moral injury, this section explores Christian tenets of faith that pertain to healing, redemption, and salvation beginning with Christian soteriology<sup>152</sup> (the study of salvation through Jesus Christ) and models of atonement, or atonement theory. This guide only contains a modest summary of Christian soteriological thought to help contextualize LDS doctrines and teachings about the Atonement of Jesus Christ within the broader framework of Christian theology. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes that “the doctrinal tenets of any religion are best understood within a broad context, and thoughtful analysis is required to understand them.”<sup>153</sup> Therefore, this section begins with a brief, general description of Christian soteriology as well as prominent atonement models within Christianity. This is followed by an explanation of what constitutes Latter-day Saint doctrine, since the doctrine of the Church is unique in its methods of establishment and conceptualization. Following this description is a review of Latter-day Saint doctrinal, devotional, and academic literature on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

### The Different Models of Atonement

When studying the theology of any religion several di-

---

152. Soteriology is the theology, doctrine, or study of salvation. In Christian theology, soteriology particularly addresses the influences of the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on salvation.

153. Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom, May 7, 2007, accessed February 14, 2017 <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine>.

mensions of a religion's specific beliefs and practices are manifest. Within the general scope of theology, there are numerous subtopics with their own nomenclatures used to describe these beliefs and practices, each meriting its exploration to best understand a religion's unique tenets. For example, soteriology is among the distinct subjects of Christian theology that examines salvation through Jesus Christ as the messianic figure. Central to a soteriological investigation and discussion is determining how the salvific work of Jesus Christ ought to be defined, interpreted, and applied to humankind. To begin, the modern use of "atonement" derives from William Tyndale's sixteenth-century translation of "reconciliation" within the New Testament, and was meant to signify someone or something "at one" or "reconciled" through Jesus Christ by means of His death on the cross.<sup>154</sup> Professor Alister E. McGrath, DPhil from the University of Oxford notes that the modern use of "atonement" within soteriology is commonly referred to as "the doctrine or work of Christ."<sup>155</sup> Either verbiage may be used when discussing the topic, for each equally refers to Christian soteriology.

Inevitably, soteriology is connected to Christology (the study of the work and person of Jesus Christ), and through the espousal of the two theological disciplines several models of atonement have been developed over time. A variety of approaches to organizing and explaining models of atonement exist within the literature of Christian theology, but they are for the most part similar in verbiage with some minor differences

---

154. Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th edition (Hoboken: Wiley, 2016), 247. For a detailed description of how humankind becomes "at one" with God according to a Latter-day Saint perspective, see Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000), 24–27.

155. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 247.

from each other. Using Professor McGrath's summary, the primary models of atonement in Christian theology include: 1) the sacrifice of Christ to mediate human sin; 2) the victory of Christ (commonly known as *Christus Victor*) over death and the devil; 3) the suffering and death of Christ as a substitution, penal substitution, or satisfaction which enabled God's forgiveness of sin; 4) the incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ as a display of God's love which binds humankind to Him.<sup>156</sup>



Carl Heinrich Bloch, *Detail from the Painting Christ and the Young Child*, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, [https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/portrait-of-christ-carl-bloch-205065?lang=eng.models of atonement.jpg](https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/portrait-of-christ-carl-bloch-205065?lang=eng.models%20of%20atonement.jpg)

---

156. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 251–265. For a more in-depth analysis of atonement models, a recommended text is Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005).

Each of these theories has developed as an attempt to make sense of the Christian records and teachings about the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as salvific. Through a combination of interpreting scripture, addressing timely controversies, and striving to reach the true nature of soteriology, many prominent figures in Christian theology such as Augustine of Hippo, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and Gustaf Aulén have contributed to the theological discussion.<sup>157</sup> Regardless of the atonement theory in question, each has been subject to both praise and critique over time by believers and nonbelievers alike. Ultimately, an understanding of the atonement, whether through the primary models of atonement (Christus Victor, recapitulation, satisfaction, substitution, penal-substitution, etc.) or other interpretations, is at the center of any Christian religion.

A belief in salvation through Christ is what differentiates Christianity from the other major world religions (e.g., Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.). The soteriological interpretation of a Christian sect is not only a distinguishing factor between Christianity and other religions, but it is also a key component of what separates different religions and sects within Christianity itself. For the most part, atonement models are not mutually exclusive, meaning facets of different atonement theories may be present in a Christian religion's doctrine and teachings. What is believed or taught by a Christian religion regarding soteriological models and theories concerning Christ's atonement are heavily influenced by the religion's method of determining their theology and doctrine. This is particularly true of The Church of Jesus

---

157. There are dozens of other prominent theologians who have contributed to the Christian dialogue of soteriology that can be listed and discussed within this guide. However, these persons are listed primarily because of their influence on the major models of atonement.

## Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### The Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Understanding what constitutes doctrine within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint is imperative to grasping their unique perspective on soteriology and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. To begin, it is important to understand that “certain words in the Mormon vocabulary have slightly different meanings and connotations than those same words have in other religions,” and “doctrine” is one of those words.<sup>158</sup> The Church issued an official statement describing its doctrine in the following manner:

Not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. A single statement made by a single leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, but is not meant to be officially binding for the whole Church. With divine inspiration, the First Presidency (the prophet and his two counselors) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the second-highest governing body of the Church) counsel together to establish doctrine that is consistently proclaimed in official Church publications. This doctrine resides in the four “standard works” of scripture (the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price), official declarations and proclamations, and the Articles of Faith.<sup>159</sup>

---

158. Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom.

159. Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom; Also, see D. Todd Christofferson, “The

In other words, the Church's scripture cannon and unanimously declared teachings, declarations, and proclamations by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles constitute the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Official Portrait), ca. 20015, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/official-portrait-quorum-twelve-2015-1584058?lang=eng>; doctrine of lds church.jpg*

The development and institutionalization of doctrine within the Church is primarily a matter of revelation received by the governing quorums of the Church. Regarding the councils of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “the objective is not simply consensus among council members but revelation from God. It is a process involving both reason and faith for obtaining the mind and will of the Lord.”<sup>160</sup> In other words, the leadership of the Church bears the responsibility and exclusively holds the ability to receive divine revelation from God to establish doctrine.<sup>161</sup> This approach to determining

---

Doctrine of Christ,” General Conference, April 2012, accessed February 24, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-doctrine-of-christ?lang=eng>. 160 Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ.”

160. Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ.”

161. Elder David A. Bednar has clarified in his book *Increase in Learning*,

doctrine is unique and significantly different than the previously explored methods of establishing doctrine found in general Christian theology. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently addressed this matter in his General Conference address “The Doctrine of Christ,” stating:

In some faith traditions, theologians claim equal teaching authority with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and doctrinal matters may become a contest of opinions between them. Some rely on the ecumenical councils of the Middle Ages and their creeds. Others place primary emphasis on the reasoning of post-apostolic theologians or on biblical hermeneutics and exegesis. We value scholarship that enhances understanding, but in the Church today, just as anciently, establishing the doctrine of Christ or correcting doctrinal deviations is a matter of divine revelation to those the Lord endows with apostolic authority.<sup>162</sup>

This is a major difference between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other major Christian religions and sects. Regarding these differences, Dr. Robert L. Millet, PhD—former professor and dean of Religious Education at BYU—observed, “We are not in the line of historic Christianity and thus are neither Catholic nor Protestant. We believe in scripture beyond the Bible and in continuing revelation through apostles and prophets. We do not accept the concepts concerning God, Christ, and the Godhead that grew out of the post-New Testament church

---

“Ultimately, however, only the President of the Church and Quorum of the First Presidency have the authority to define the doctrines of the Church.” See David A. Bednar, *Increase in Learning*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 2011), 152.

162. Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ.”



councils.”<sup>163</sup> In other words, Latter-day Saints engage in academia and theology regarding many facets of faith and religion, but these pursuits and methods do not necessarily generate a binding doctrine to the Church.<sup>164</sup> However, they can assist in creating a better understanding of what doctrine is, as well as provide clarity to its implications and applications.

In some of the writing by prominent church leaders what is written may not be interpreted the same by all readers. For example, Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s book *Mormon Doctrine* painted a dogmatic perspective of the Church’s doctrine in many ways. A dogmatic approach to developing and interpreting doctrine is not inherently a positive or negative approach, but inevitably, any approach to doctrinal development in a religion has its pros and cons. Within the Church the fine line between an authoritative apostolic voice and dogmatic opinion can blur, potentially resulting in an oversimplification of the Church’s doctrine. After all, there is a level of complexity and ordering to Latter-day Saint doctrine suggesting that not all doctrine is created equal.

The Church recognizes that “some doctrines are more important than others and might be considered core doc-

---

163. Robert L. Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” in *By Study and By Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator*, 69–89, edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 72.

164. Theological discourse and writing as well as academic research and discussion regarding the Church’s doctrine have taken place by members of the Church throughout its history and have had some form of influence on its doctrinal development. For one example of how theology and academia might have influenced the Church’s doctrine, see Thomas G. Alexander, “The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine,” *Sunstone* 5, no. 4 (July-August 1980): 24–33.

trines.”<sup>165</sup> This concept, as simple as it may sound, is somewhat of a conundrum. In the last decade, there have been multiple ecclesiastic and academic voices offering their interpretation of what a tiered-doctrine system of the Church looks like.<sup>166</sup> Most recently, Anthony Sweat, PhD, Michael MacKay, PhD, and Gerrit Dirkmaat, PhD—assistant professors of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University—elaborated on this subject with the intent of generating more “dialogue about the nuances and complexities of Mormon doctrine.”<sup>167</sup> To begin, they recognize contemporary Latter-day Saints typically interpret doctrine as “eternal or unchanging gospel truths,” noting that in the Church’s history “other types of non-eternal, authoritative teachings,” have also been considered doctrinal at times.<sup>168</sup> Then, in addressing the complexity factor, Sweat, MacKay, and Dirkmaat comment on the Latter-day Saint emphasis of living prophets and modern revelation, which ultimately signifies the Church’s doctrine “is not static.”<sup>169</sup> Similarly, Robert L. Millet 165. Approaching Mormon Doctrine,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom.

166. Two examples are seen in David A. Bednar, Increase in Learning, 151–172 and Robert L. Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” in *By Study and By Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator*, 69–89.

167. Anthony R. Sweat, Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, “Evaluating Latter-day Saint Doctrine,” in *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes: 45th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 23–44, edited by Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara Morgan Gardner, (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2016), 23–44.

168. Sweat, MacKay, Dirkmaat, “Evaluating Latter-day Saint Doctrine,” in *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes: 45th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 24–25.

169. Sweat, MacKay, Dirkmaat, “Evaluating Latter-day Saint Doctrine,” in *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes: 45th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 26–27; See also Article of Faith 1:9 and Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” BYU Speeches, February 26, 1980, accessed

once wrote:

No one who has spent time surveying the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or made an effort to reflect on what Mormons teach and believe will suppose that it is a simple matter to define Latter-day Saint doctrine. It is, to be sure, a challenging enterprise. There is not, within Mormonism, a systematic theology. This is not simply due to the Church's relative youth and inexperience with theology-making. It is, rather, due primarily to the dynamics of our canon and the fluidity of modern revelation, both of which tend to militate against standardization.<sup>170</sup>

The Church's way of establishing doctrine might be perceived as an idiosyncratic peculiar method when compared to general Christianity. Nevertheless, when conceptualized in a systematic form it becomes easier to identify.

As a model for understanding and categorizing Latter-day Saint doctrine, Sweat, MacKay, and Dirkmaat proposed the following four-tier system:

1. Core, eternal teachings/doctrine: unchanging truths of salvation.
2. Supporting teachings/doctrine: elaborate, descriptive, timely teachings expanding on core doctrine.
3. Policy teachings/doctrine: timely statements related to appli-

---

March 11, 2017, [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson\\_fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson_fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/).

170. Robert L. Millet, "Defining Doctrine: A Response to Loyd Ericson," *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 1.

cations of supportive and eternal teachings.

4. Esoteric teachings/doctrine: unknown or only partially revealed or yet to be revealed truths.<sup>171</sup>

This method of understanding and categorizing doctrine is not binding to the Church or an official model used by the Church for interpreting its teachings, yet it is useful when searching through LDS source material seeking to understand their beliefs.<sup>172</sup> The purpose of having explored what constitutes doctrine and what does not is so that in the following section it may be easier to discern between what is a doctrine of the Church and what is someone's personal teaching or suggestion.

Within the review of Latter-day Saint literature on the Atonement of Jesus Christ some material is considered doctrinal, while others are devotional or academic in nature. Due to the tendency of these three forms to overlap, what is reviewed is not categorized along those lines, but elements of each is incorporated.

### The Atonement of Jesus Christ: Latter-day Saint Perspectives

As the central doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Atonement of Jesus Christ is an immense subject.<sup>173</sup> To begin, a basic description of the Atonement of Je-

171. Sweat, MacKay, Dirkmaat, "Evaluating Latter-day Saint Doctrine," in *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes: 45th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 27–34.

172. Another useful method for categorizing specific teachings of the Church as "Doctrines, Principles, and Applications," was explored by Elder David A. Bednar. See David A. Bednar, *Increase in Learning*.

173. The author recognizes that there is literature on aspects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ not explored in depth within this study which could be

sus Christ for Latter-day Saints is as follows:

The Atonement included His [Jesus Christ] suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and His suffering and death on the cross, and it ended with His Resurrection. Through He suffered beyond comprehension—so much so that He bled from every pore and asked whether it were possible that this burden be lifted from Him—He submitted to the Father’s will in a supreme expression of love for His Father and for us. This triumph of Jesus Christ over spiritual death [transgression and sin; separation from the Spirit and God] by His suffering and over physical death by His Resurrection is called the Atonement.<sup>174</sup>



---

reviewed. For the purposes of this guide, only certain facets of the Atonement of Jesus Christ from a Latter-day Saint perspective are focused upon. 174. *Preach My Gospel* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 52.

Elder Tad. R. Callister once wrote about the difference between the Latter-day Saint understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ compared to that of general Christianity:

Sometimes it is difficult for us as members of the Church to distinguish between our beliefs in the Atonement and those of the rest of the Christian world. Many of us grow up thinking that what we know and believe about this central doctrine is also what the world knows and believes, but it is not so. Without modern scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to grasp many of the basic tenets of the Atonement.<sup>175</sup>

In a word, *scripture* is what constitutes the primary difference between how the Atonement of Jesus Christ is understood and applied by Latter-day Saints compared the rest of Christianity. Perhaps it is appropriate to mention that, “Though these scriptural bases suggest the suffering of the atoning Christ was a combination of bodily experience, perfect empathy, and God’s abandonment, the essential mystery of the atonement remains for Mormons just that—a mystery. This point deserves emphasis: no Mormon presumes to understand the doctrine of atonement in its entirety.”<sup>176</sup>

Within the Church both exegetical and eisegetical interpretations of scripture are used by its leaders and laity alike to best try and understand the Atonement of Jesus Christ. A practice common to Latter-day Saints is applying the scriptures to

---

175. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 15.

176. Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, Vol 1., The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 231.

oneself, like Nephi in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 19:23). For Latter-day Saints, many scriptures regarding Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice have literal and symbolic interpretations, both of which inform a reader's intellectual, spiritual, and practical understanding of scripture. The interpretation of scripture is important when approaching any doctrinal concept, especially the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Within the Church's scripture canon there are hundreds of verses referencing Jesus Christ, many of which touch upon the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>177</sup> A basic doctrinal outline of the Atonement of Jesus Christ with prominent, correlating scriptures from the Latter-day Saint canon is as follows:<sup>178</sup>

**A. God governs the universe by law.**

1. To bring about his eternal purposes, God instituted laws to govern his children (see D&C 130:20–21; 132:5; 2 Nephi 2:13).
2. Sin is the willful breaking of the law (see 1 John 3:4; James 4:17).
3. God's justice requires that a penalty be paid for every sin (see Matthew 5:26; Alma 42:16–18, 22–26; D&C 19:17).

---

177. Note: the canonical scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consist of The Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments), The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price. All biblical verses cited within this guide are from the King James Version (KJV).

178. Additional scriptures regarding the Atonement of Jesus Christ are found in the Church's canonical reference tools "Topical Guide" s.v. "Jesus Christ, Atonement through," and "Index" s.v. "Jesus Christ, Atonement through," as well as other subtopics under "Jesus Christ" within the two resources.

4. All of us sin and are therefore fallen and subject to justice (see Alma 34:9, 16; Romans 3:23).

**B. Because we are fallen, we have need of an Atonement.**

1. All of us would suffer an everlasting physical and spiritual death without Christ's atonement (see 2 Nephi 9:6–12; Helaman 14:16).
2. Because all of us sin, we would have remained subject to the devil forever without the atonement of Christ (see 2 Nephi 9:8–12; Alma 34:8–9; Romans 3:23).

**C. Only Jesus Christ possessed the qualifications and attributes necessary to perform an infinite Atonement.**

1. As the only Begotten Son of God, the Savior inherited the capacity to suffer for the sins of all the children of God (see Jacob 4:5; D&C 20:21; 19:18; Mosiah 4:7).
2. The Savior was free from personal sin (see 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:15; D&C 45:3–4).
3. The Savior had power over death (see John 5:26; 10:17–18).

**D. By means of His divine attributes and the power of the Father, Jesus accomplished the infinite and eternal Atonement.**

1. Jesus submitted himself to the will of the Father in performing the Atonement (see Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; John 4:34; 8:29; Mosiah 15:7).
2. The Atonement was an act of pure love on the part of God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ (see John 15:13; 3:16; 1 John 4:7–10).
3. The Atonement made by the Savior began in Gethsemane and ended at the empty tomb (see Matthew 26:36–



46; Luke 22:39–44; Mark 15:25–37).

4. The Savior descended below all things in taking upon Himself the sins of all the children of God (see D&C 122:8; 88:6; 2 Nephi 9:21).
5. The suffering endured by the Savior was beyond what any mortal could endure (see Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:15–20; 1 Nephi 19:12).
6. The infinite Atonement affects worlds without number and will save all of God's children except sons of perdition (see Alma 34:9–10, 12; D&C 76:22–24, 40–43).

**E. The Atonement of Christ harmonized the laws of justice and mercy.**

1. Mercy cannot rob justice (see Alma 42:13–14, 24–25).
2. Justice is satisfied by the Atonement, and thus mercy can allow our souls to be cleansed through repentance (see Alma 42:13–15, 22–25; 34:15–16; Mosiah 15:9).
3. Jesus stood as a mediator, or intercessor, for all the children of God in satisfying the demands of justice (see Alma 34:10–16; Mosiah 15:7–9; Isaiah 53:12; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:5–6).

**F. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is essential for the salvation of all the children of God.**

1. The Savior overcame physical death and secured a resurrection for all the children of God (see Alma 7:12; Mosiah 16:7–10; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; Mormon 9:12–14).
2. The agony and suffering of Christ made it possible for all of us to escape eternal punishment if we repent (see Alma 7:13; D&C 19:15–19).
3. Little children are redeemed through the Atonement of Christ (see Moroni 8:8; D&C 29:46–50; Mosiah 3:16–

18; 15:25).

4. The Atonement of Christ brings everyone back into the presence of God for judgment (see 2 Nephi 2:10; Revelation 20:11–15).

**G. We must do the will of the Father and the Son to receive the full benefit of the Atonement.**

1. The Savior came to save all who would obey him (see Hebrews 5:9; 2 Nephi 9:21; Mosiah 3:19; Alma 11:37).
2. If we do not keep God's commandments, we must suffer for our own sins (see Alma 11:41; D&C 19:15–20).
3. Mercy is extended to those who keep God's commandments (see Daniel 9:4; Hosea 10:12; Psalm 103:17–18).<sup>179</sup>

Within this outline, there are elements of the traditional models of atonement in Christian soteriology (e.g., Christ's victory over death and sin, recapitulation regarding Adam and the Fall, the satisfaction of God's justice, substitution and penal-substitution, etc.). Despite not being an exhaustive listing of every facet of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, this outline is a reasonable representation of most doctrinal tenets as rooted in LDS canonical scripture.

In another source, *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*—a reference book approved by The First Presidency of the Church—a simplified explanation of the key components and outcomes of the Atonement of Jesus Christ are also outlined. It explains how humankind is fallen and imperfect and that God the Father appointed a Savior (Jesus Christ) to overcome physical death and individual sin, thus offering peace and salvation

179. *Doctrines of the Gospel: Student Manual*, 2nd edition (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 22–23.

for all.<sup>180</sup> Within this book, the concept of empathy leading to healing through Jesus Christ is briefly explained. It reads, “As part of the His Atonement, Jesus took upon Himself the pains, sicknesses, and infirmities of all people (see Alma 7:11–12). He understands your suffering because He has experienced it. With this perfect understanding, He knows how to help you. You can cast ‘all your care upon him; for he careth for you’ (1 Peter 5:7).”<sup>181</sup> Once again, scripture received by revelation through prophets both ancient and modern is central to the Church’s doctrine.

---

180. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church



*The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Official Portrait), ca. 2008, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/first-presidency?ds=477209?lang=eng&presidency.jpg>

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 14 – 21.

181. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, 20.

From the two preceding sources that describe a holistic view of the Atonement of Jesus Christ three principles ought to be reviewed in greater detail: the suffering of Jesus Christ, His descent below all things, and His ability to succor (D&C 18:10–12 and D&C 19:15–19; D&C 122:5–8; Alma 7:7, 10–13).

## The Suffering of Jesus Christ

When examining the suffering of Jesus Christ one must investigate why He suffered, what He suffered, and what purpose His suffering served. To begin, two principles are essential to understand in relation to the suffering of Jesus. First, Latter-day Saints believe that God and Jesus Christ are not beyond feeling; both feel emotion and are subject to suffering or passions particularly pertaining to the experiences of God’s creations on earth—especially the human family.<sup>182</sup> Second, Latter-day Saints believe that humans are autonomous beings, meaning they have agency. With this agency, God has granted to all men and women intelligence and an ability to act (2 Nephi 2:26), to learn the differences between good and evil by making a variety of choices, thus becoming empowered beings.<sup>183</sup> When a person makes a wrong decision per God’s laws and standards, when evil is chosen rather than good, it bears weight in determining their salvation and eternal progression because they have now transgressed or sinned.

This is important because God and Jesus “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31). According to Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a transgression is “an exercise of moral agency

---

182. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 84–88; see also Moses 7:24–37.

183. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 252–257.

amounting to a willful breaking of a law,”<sup>184</sup> and in the words of Terryl L. Givens, PhD, a Latter-day Saint religious scholar, sin is “the willing choice to violate moral law”<sup>185</sup> (see also 1 John 3:4). In the Church’s seminal work *The Articles of Faith*, Elder James E. Talmage defined sin as “any condition, whether omission of things required or in commission of acts forbidden, that tends to prevent or hinder the development of the human soul,” adding that “sin may be committed inadvertently or in ignorance.”<sup>186</sup>

The transgressions and sins of men and women from Adam and Eve to the present day have caused a separation from God both collectively and individually. In the words of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland,

Adam transgressed and so have all of us; thus the judgment of death (physically) and consequences of hell (spiritually) is pronounced as a just reward. Furthermore, once guilty, none of us could personally do anything to overcome that fate. We do not have in us the seeds of immortality allowing us to conquer death physically, and we have not been perfect in our behavior, thus forfeiting the purity that would let us return to the presence of God spiritually.<sup>187</sup>

In this fallen, sinful state men and women became needful of a power that could allow for repentance—a turning toward God

---

184. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, November 1993, accessed March 18, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1993/11/the-great-plan-of-happiness?lang=eng>.

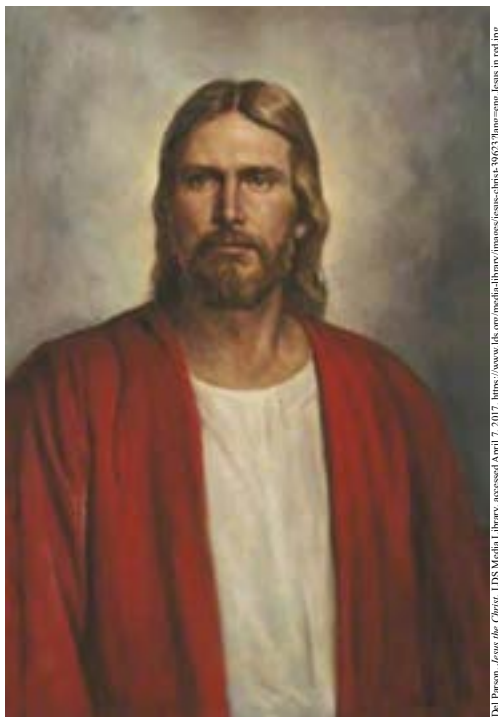
185. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 46.

186. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 1924 edition (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 57–58.

187. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1997), 225.

and changing of errant ways, reconciliation, and mediation with God for wrongful decisions and actions, as well as inappropriate indecision and inaction. It is through repentance and obedience to God's commandments that men and women find forgiveness from Him (D&C 1:32).

To make change possible Jesus Christ took upon Him-



self the suffering and punishment of all men and women who would ever live, promising that they would not suffer if they repent and accept Him as their Savior and Redeemer. Joseph Smith received revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ regarding this process:

Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink— Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men (D&C 19:15–17).

The extend of Jesus’ suffering was immense. Elder Tad R. Callister notes,

Not only did the Savior suffer for our conscious, deliberate sins, but he also suffered for our innocent transgressions... Such Atonement, however, was not without its cost. Even when a law is innocently violated, a price must nevertheless be paid... This payment involves suffering, and whether it be for the innocent or repentant, that suffering is centered in the atoning sacrifice of the Savior.<sup>188</sup>

It is in recognizing that Jesus suffered for a person’s sins which inspires and empowers them to start making reparations and changes in their life for wrongdoings. As Terryl Givens points out,

---

188. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 102–103.

His [Jesus Christ's] atonement, in which he takes upon himself the pain and experience of human sin, enables and motivates the repentant individual to use his freedom to better ends—to re-choose, in other words. This process of repentance, re-choosing, continually self-correcting and re-orienting one's life, continues until one finds oneself in harmony with God and the eternal laws that undergird the universe.<sup>189</sup>

The process of repentance followed by adherence to God's laws and ordinances helps to enable the love and mercy of Jesus Christ which were made possible in His atoning sacrifice (A of F 1:3–4). In the words of Elder James E. Talmage,

The application of the atonement to individual transgression, whereby the sinner may obtain absolution through compliance with the laws and ordinances embodied in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is conclusively attested by scripture. Since forgiveness of sins can be secured in none other way, there being either in heaven or earth no name save that of Jesus Christ where by salvation shall come unto the children of men,<sup>190</sup> every soul stands in need of the Savior's mediation, since all are sinners.<sup>191</sup>

Why a person must obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ as a part of repentance is “because Christ was willing to mediate for us in the courts of heaven, paying full

189. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 46.

190. The original text has the following footnote placed here by the author James E. Talmage: “P. of G. P., Moses 6:52; compare B. of M. 2 Nephi 25:20; Mosiah 3:17; 5:8; Doc. And Cov. 76:1.”

191. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 26.



price for every transgression and thereby meeting the legal demands of justice,” by which “he rightly became our new master and could mercifully offer freedom to all who would accept his terms.”<sup>192</sup>

The reason that Jesus “suffered death,” and “the pain of all men,” is so that all people could “come unto him,” and through the “conditions of repentance,” be enabled to draw closer to God (D&C 18:11–12). In the process of repentance, a person will experience some sorrow and pain for their wrongdoings, but not to the extent which Jesus did (D&C 19:10–19). Repentance “requires remorse of conscience and godly sorrow, but the Lord does allow the repentant to escape the type and depth of suffering he experienced” through His love and mercy.<sup>193</sup>

## The Descent of Jesus Christ Below All Things



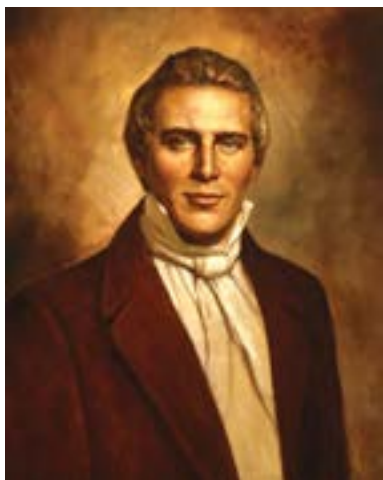
Harry Anderson, *Jesus Praying in Gethsemane (Christ in Gethsemane)*, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/jesus-praying-in-gethsemane-39591/lang-eng/garden-of-gethsemane.jpg>

192. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 230.

193. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 315.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated at Liberty, Missouri in 1839, he received revelations from Jesus Christ that would later be canonized by the Church. Within these revelations, Joseph is taught an important principle about the importance of experience in life, even those which might be extremely trying or negative<sup>194</sup>. After providing Joseph with a long list of difficult, treacherous things which could and did befall him in life, Jesus states, “above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:5–7). Next, Jesus states the pinnacle of his revelation: “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:8).

Initially, it may be difficult to see how anything Jesus stated to Joseph could possibly be for his betterment or raise him



---

194. For further reading and insightful applications regarding this topic and section, see Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lessons from Liberty Jail,” BYU Speeches, September 7, 2008, accessed March 29, 2017, [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland\\_lessons-liberty-jail/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_lessons-liberty-jail/).

up when imprisoned, suffering mentally and physically from cold, hunger, and knowing his fellow Latter-day Saints have been and will continue to be persecuted. However, Jesus' revelatory words to Joseph years earlier while in Kirtland, Ohio give additional insight to what was being taught about the Atonement of Jesus Christ in Liberty. Within this revelation, Jesus is described as, "He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things" (D&C 88:5–6). In simple terms, Jesus was teaching Joseph that even bad life experiences are beneficial for people if they will remember that Jesus, being the greatest of all, understands all pain and difficulty because He experienced every evil imaginable (D&C 88:6; 122:7–8). Elder James E. Talmage once offered his own understanding of this principle:

The mortal probation is provided as an opportunity for advancement; but so great are the difficulties and the dangers, so strong is the influence of evil in the world, and so weak is man in resistance thereto, that without the aid of a power above that of humanity no soul would find its way back to God from whom it came. The need of a Redeemer lies in the inability of man to raise himself from the temporal to the spiritual plane, from the lower kingdom to the higher... So, for the advancement of man from his present fallen and relatively degenerate state to the higher condition of spiritual life, a power above his own must cooperate. Through the operation of the laws obtaining in the higher kingdom man may be reached and lifted; himself he cannot save by his own unaided effort.<sup>195</sup>

Within the words of Elder Talmage is the redemptive principle of Jesus' descent. In descending below and experiencing all

195. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 26–28.

things, Jesus became capable of reaching any depth of sorrow, suffering, pain, or loss and raising any person to a higher level. In other words, “Jesus’ taking upon his sensitive nature the sins of the world, opening his awareness to the totality of human evil, was in effect a *descent* into ‘hell.’...Jesus descended through awareness of human evil that he might obtain the necessary understanding to be a light to all men and women.”<sup>196</sup>

Jesus’ suffering and awareness of all human malevolence was not an impersonal endeavor. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once taught, “Having ‘descended below all things,’ He comprehends, perfectly and personally, the full range of human suffering! (D&C 88:6; see D&C 122:8).”<sup>197</sup> Similarly, Elder Tad R. Callister has written,

The Savior descended beneath all sins, all transgressions, all ailments, and all temptations known to the human family. He knew the sum total of the human plight, not just because he witnessed it, but because he embraced it... it was a total confrontation with and internalization of every human experience, every human plight, every human trial... Christ’s Atonement was a descent into the seemingly ‘bottomless pit’ of human agony.<sup>198</sup>

By reframing Jesus’ words, Elder Callister suggests that His revelation to Joseph was stating, “no matter what the world throws at you; no matter what you suffer, no matter what temptations

196. Lorin K. Hansen, “The ‘Moral’ Atonement as a Mormon Interpretation,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 216.

197. Neal A. Maxwell, “Applying the Atoning Blood of Christ,” General Conference, October 1997, accessed March 20, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1997/10/apply-the-atoning-blood-of-christ?lang=eng>.

198. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 95–96.

you face—I faced it all and more.”<sup>199</sup> Therefore, through the atoning experience, Jesus gained a total and complete understanding of all humanity, thus enabling His ability to forgive and have empathy for all men and women because He truly comprehends every human situation. In the words of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “however many mistakes you feel you have made or talents you think you don’t have, or however far from home and family and God you feel you have traveled, I testify that you have not traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”<sup>200</sup>



Harry Anderson, *Jesus Christ*, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/jesus-christ-art-profile-howe-37700?lang=eng&img=eng-jesus-in-white.jpg>

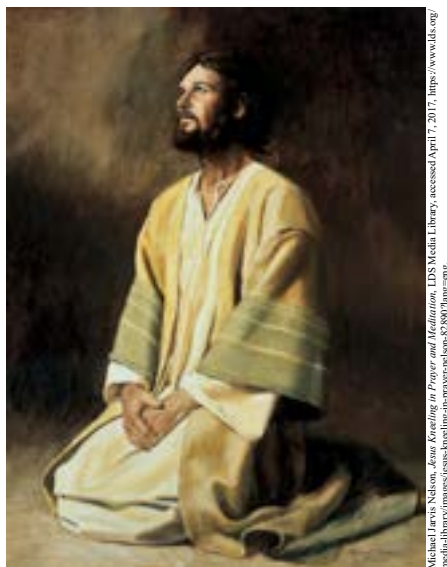
---

199. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 96.

200. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” General Conference, April 2012, accessed March 26, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-laborers-in-the-vineyard?lang=eng>.

## The Ability of Jesus Christ to Succor

Another aspect of the Atonement of Jesus Christ which is also had among traditional models of atonement like substitution is seeing His experience of suffering as something which enables Him to become “the supremely empathic One.”<sup>201</sup> Evidence of this notion is found in the Bible as well as scriptures of the Church. For example, the Book of Isaiah contains Messianic prophecies which, according to Christian tradition, correlate with the grace, mercy, sympathy, and empathy of Jesus Christ. Examples include how He will “comfort his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted,” (Isaiah 49:13) and “bind up the brokenhearted... to comfort all that mourn” (Isaiah 61: 1–2). In a Messianic prophecy regarding the atoning sacrifice, Isaiah writes, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our



Michael Jarvis Nelson, *Jesus Kneeling in Prayer and Meditation*, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/jesus-kneeling-in-prayer-nelson-82890?lang=eng>.

---

201. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 229.

sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4). After the death of Jesus, the Apostle Paul wrote that this comfort in part came through Jesus being “made like unto his brethren,” so that He could bring mercy through “reconciliation,” with God “for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17–18).

This ability to succor was also highlighted in the Book of Mormon. As noted by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland,

Virtually all Christian churches teach some kind of doctrine regarding the atonement of Christ and the expiation of our sins that comes through it. But the Book of Mormon teaches that and much more. It teaches that Christ also provides relief of a more temporal sort, taking upon himself our mortal sicknesses and infirmities, our earthly trials and tribulations, our personal heartaches and loneliness and sorrows—all done in addition to taking upon himself the burden of our sins.<sup>202</sup>

For example, the prophet Jacob taught that Jesus “cometh into the world that He may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, *he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam*” (2 Nephi 9:21, emphasis added). In suffering the pain of every individual who is a member of the human family, Jesus truly became capable of empathy for all people. The teachings from Isaiah, Paul, and Jacob about this aspect of the Atonement of Jesus Christ are imparted in a succinct manner by the prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon during his mission to Gideon.

---

202. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 223.

First, Alma prophesied of the Redeemer who was to be “born of Mary... even the Son of God” (Alma 7:7–10). Then, in teaching about the salvific, redemptive purposes of Jesus’ suffering and death, Alma explained:

And he shall go forth suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and *he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.* Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance...” (Alma 7:11–13, emphasis added).

In these verses of scripture Alma teaches that Jesus experienced the weaknesses of the human condition in order to know how to offer relief, support, and aid to people who are in difficult situations of life.

Regarding these verses, Elder Dallin H. Oaks once asked crucial clarifying questions essential to understanding what is meant by Alma’s teachings:

Who can be succored and strengthened through the Atonement of Jesus Christ? Alma taught that the Savior would “take upon him the pains and the sicknesses



of *his people*” and “succor *his people*” (Alma 7:11, 12, emphasis added). Who are “his people” in this promise? Is it all mortals—all who enjoy the reality of resurrection through the Atonement? Or is it only those select servants qualified through ordinances and covenants?<sup>203</sup>



Aldo Rebecchi, *Christus*, LDS Media Library, accessed April 7, 2017, [https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/christus-statue-1025369?lang=eng.christus\\_statue.jpeg](https://www.lds.org/media-library/images/christus-statue-1025369?lang=eng.christus_statue.jpeg)

In response to his own questions, Elder Oaks suggests that anyone who actively seeks God’s help through the Savior can receive the comfort, healing, and strength because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.<sup>204</sup> The ability of Jesus to succor those in need is not limited to Latter-day Saints, rather it is a power of

---

203. Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” General Conference, October 2015, accessed March 20, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/strengthened-by-the-atonement-of-jesus-christ?lang=eng>.

204. Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Jesus Christ made available for all people.

Terryl Givens observes that “the Book of Mormon clearly portrays perfect empathy as an aspect of Christ’s character and mission, serving as a powerful means for breaking through the calcified human heart. The almost irresistible power of his superabundant love, manifest in his choice to suffer what he suffered, can itself transform the sinner’s heart.”<sup>205</sup> It is Jesus Christ, the “wounded leader,” who through His experience of all things enables perfect empathy and succor for any wound humankind can suffer.<sup>206</sup>

---

205. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 233.

206. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 210.

## **Section 3 – Accessing the Healing Power of Jesus Christ**

This section is based on the premise that because of the Atonement, Jesus Christ is a universal source of power for healing wounds, be they physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual. The wounds of moral injury (i.e., guilt, shame, etc.) can therefore be alleviated in some way by means of coming unto Christ and learning more about His Atonement. When transgression, betrayal, or failure to live up to a moral code occurs, regret and guilt will likely ensue. Latter-day Saints ought to be informed on what resource will help them find healing during these difficult times.

The Latter-day Saint understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ is in certain ways broader and deeper than other Christian faiths because of the expanded scripture canon and teachings offered by living prophets and apostles. A better understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ can help generate healing in a Latter-day Saint with moral injury. For example, there is great power made available, especially for Latter-day Saints, in the notion of Christ's descent below all things. This concept is crucial because it means He has descended even below moral injury, and with that descent below moral injury there is a power and ability of Christ to assist in someone's ascent from the wounds of moral injury (e.g., to go from the depths of guilt to the heights of guiltlessness). Accessing this healing power of Jesus Christ made available by His Atonement can not only lift someone who feels weighed down morally, but it can repair the heart and soul of an individual with moral injury.

The intent of this section is to offer a method of spiritual

healing for Latter-day Saint service members who experience moral injury. It provides insight on doctrines of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and promotes basic devotional methods that increase faith in Jesus Christ and provide access to the Spirit of the Holy Ghost as a method of spiritual healing. Through education and application of gospel principles, an increased influence of the Holy Ghost will ameliorate psychological, emotional, or spiritual wounds caused by morally injurious events. While this material is intended for post-injury healing, from a psychoeducational perspective it also applies as a preventative measure to moral injury. Keep in mind, the ideas and suggestions covered herein might not provide complete psychological, emotional, or spiritual healing. However, it does offer a way to shift toward greater peace as part of the healing process from moral injury. To do this one must first understand how to access the healing power of Jesus Christ.

## A Conceptual Model for Healing Moral Injury

At the April 2017 General Conference of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught,

Our Heavenly Father never intended that we would deal with the maze of personal problems and social issues on our own. God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son to help us. And His Son, Jesus Christ, gave His life for us. All so that we could have access to godly power—power sufficient to deal with the burdens, obstacles, and temptations of our day.<sup>207</sup>

---

207. Russel M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” General Conference, April 2017, accessed April 5, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2017/04/drawing-the-power-of-jesus->

Addressing how a person brings this power into their life, President Nelson continued,

We begin by learning about Him [Jesus Christ] ... The more we know about the Savior's ministry and mission—the more we understand His doctrine and what He did for us—the more we know that He can provide the power that we need for our lives... As we invest time in learning about the Savior and His atoning sacrifice, we are drawn to participate in another key element to accessing His power: we choose to have faith in Him and follow Him... Faith in Jesus Christ propels us to do things we otherwise would not do. Faith that motivates us to action gives us more access to His power.<sup>208</sup>

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord revealed through the Joseph Smith the same principle described by President Nelson, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63). As a person acts with faith in Jesus Christ, he or she is given access to God's power to help withstand and overcome their personal burdens, trials, and afflictions—including moral injury.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy recently counseled,

Such simple acts of faith as studying the scriptures daily, fasting regularly, and praying with real intent deepen our well of spiritual capacity to meet the demands of mortality. Over time, simple habits of belief lead to miraculous

---

[christ-into-our-lives?lang=eng#note13](#).

208. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives.”

results. They transform our faith from a seedling into a dynamic power for good in our lives. Then, when challenges come our way, our rootedness in Christ provides steadfastness for our souls.<sup>209</sup>

Simple acts of faith mentioned by Elder Clayton indeed have an impact on the soul, both before difficult events as he stated, and after. In the book *Increase in Learning*, Elder David A. Bednar—member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—describes patterns of learning and applying the doctrines and teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>210</sup> His concepts are useful for understanding how a person’s soul can be positively influence by faithfully acting in accordance with the doctrine of Christ and the practices of His Church.

What follows is an adaptation of Elder David A. Bednar’s use of knowledge, understanding, intelligence, doctrines, principles, and applications—as found in *Increase in Learning*—depicting how a focus on the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ can generate greater faith in Him, resulting in access to His healing power. As a conceptual model, it depicts a process of spiritual healing for Latter-day Saints from moral injury.

---

209. L. Whitney Clayton, “Whatsoever He Saith Unto You, Do It,” General Conference, April 2017, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2017/04/whatsoever-he-saith-unto-you-do-it?lang=eng>.

210. Bednar, *Increase in Learning*. See endnote 161 for full citation.

## Figure 1: An Exposition of the Soul.<sup>211</sup>

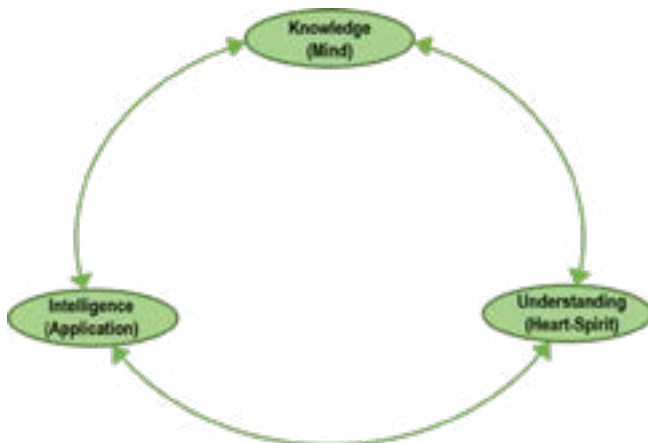


Figure 1: An Exposition of the Soul

Austin J. Bowler, Figure 1: An Exposition of the Soul and Figure 2: The Gospel Facilitates the Soul's Development, April 2017.

The Lord has revealed, “The spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). What influences the soul, and how does a soul progress? Using Elder Bednar’s terminology—knowledge, understanding, intelligence—this figure depicts the progression of the soul (spirit and body). A person’s knowledge is what he or she learns, the fact and data driven information entering the mind of both spiritual and worldly matters. Understanding consists of the feelings of the heart and spiritual revelations received, and a person’s intelligence is the righteous application of both what is known and understood by an individual. As a person learns, feels, and does what is right before God, their soul develops. This development and progression is circular in causality, for what is known, felt, and done equally informs a person’s knowledge, understanding, and intelligence. Part of Heavenly Father’s work and glory is to help His children—all humankind—gain eternal life (Moses 1:39). To help

211. Bednar, *Increase in Learning*, 63–75.

with in this process He has revealed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Figure 2: The Gospel Facilitates the Soul's Development.**<sup>212</sup>



Figure 2: The Gospel Facilitate the Sou's Development

God reveals doctrines, principles, and applications to assist His children in their progression through mortality and into eternal life. Revealed doctrines are eternal truths and a source of power that influence people and the world in a positive way. Revealed principles are guidelines based in doctrine which help direct a righteous use of agency when making decision in life. Revealed applications are the behaviors and actions of a person, meaning the gospel in action or righteous implementation of the gospel. One of the purposes of the gospel is to help increase light, knowledge, understanding, and intelligence in a person's life by learning and living God's eternal and temporal laws. As doctrine, principles, and applications are incorporated into a person's life their soul flourishes in spiritual progression, for "intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth 212. Bednar, *Increase in Learning*, 151–156.



unto light” (D&C 88:40). An issue in mortality is that there are things which cause dissonance—a spiritual wounding—within the soul.

**Figure 3: Spiritual Wounds—Soul Wounds.**



Figure 3: Spiritual Wounds—Soul Wounds

Austin J. Bowler, Figure 3: *Spiritual Wounds—Soul Wounds* and Figure 4: *The Healing Power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost*, April 2017.

Dissonance within the soul can be caused by many things. One issue which arises is sin and transgression. Another problem people face is ignorance to God’s will and false traditions perpetuated by previous generations. Moral injury is a wound similar to the previously mentioned problems of the soul that cause spiritual discord. As moral standards or expectations are breached, wounding and dissonance like those experienced by sin or transgression occurs (pervasive guilt, shame, self-harming attitude, etc.). These problems obstruct, wound, and pollute the soul’s development because there is a lack of harmony between what a person knows in their mind, feels in their heart, and does (or has done) in their life. To clear the obstructions and heal the

soul, Jesus Christ atoned for all humankind.

**Figure 4: The Healing Power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost.**

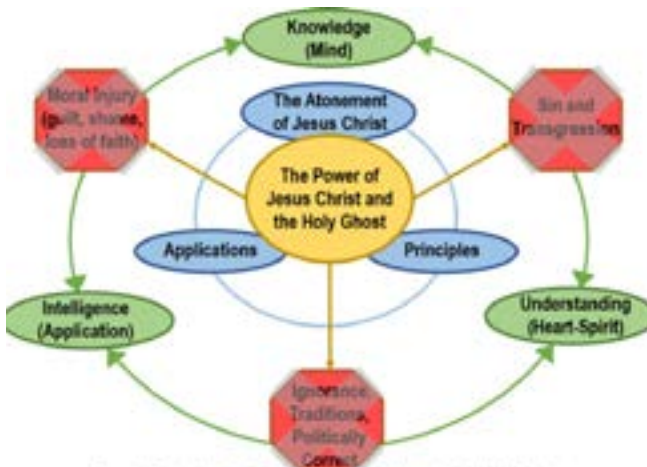


Figure 4: The Healing Power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost

To access this healing power of Jesus Christ, focusing on the doctrines of the Atonement with their correlating principles and applications can target, ameliorate, and eliminate spiritual wounds—including moral injury. The scriptures testify of this in multiple accounts: “faith in Christ,” manifest through “mighty prayer,” causes guilt to be “swept away” (Enos 1:3–8); God grants His Spirit and forgiveness thereby removing the stains of wrongdoing (Alma 24:5–12); the soul “tormented with the paints of hell,” is brought into light and joy through remembrance of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Alma 36:12–23); and “faith in Christ” removes the clouds of darkness in life (Helaman 5: 40–41). A person with moral injury, similar to those who have sinned or fall into falls traditions, needs to remember to “draw night to God, and he will draw night to you,” and healing will

begin to occur (James 4:8).

## Personal Devotional Applications

The prophet Alma taught, “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass... And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls” (Alma 37:6–7). The following applications connected to the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ are “small means” which will help a service member go from a state of moral dissonance to a returned status of harmony through the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost:

**Prayer.** Prayer, a communication and communion with Heavenly Father, can be a powerful means by which peace and comfort can enter someone’s life. President Boyd K. Packer has taught, “One of the adversary’s sharpest tools is to convince us that we are no longer worthy to pray. No matter who you are, or what you may have done, you can always pray.”<sup>213</sup> See 2 Nephi 32:8–9 and D&C 10:5.

***Read and Study the Book of Mormon.*** There is great spiritual power available through reading the Christ centric messages of the Book of Mormon and applying its teachings. President Thomas S. Monson recently declared, “My dear associates in the work of the Lord, I implore each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day. As we do so, we will be in a position to hear the voice of the Spirit, to resist temptation, to overcome doubt and fear, and to receive heaven’s help

---

213. Boyd K. Packer, “Prayer and Promptings,” General Conference, October 2009, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/10/prayer-and-promptings?lang=eng>.

in our lives.”<sup>214</sup>

***Purposefully Partake of the Sacrament.*** The Sacrament—LDS communion—provides a weekly opportunity to demonstrate discipleship and repentance before God and receive the promised blessing of the Spirit. Elder Melvin J. Ballard once stated, “If there is a feeling in our hearts that we are sorry for what we have done... that we would like to be forgiven, then... repair to the sacrament table where, if we have sincerely repented and put ourselves in proper condition, we shall be forgiven, and spiritual healing will come to our souls... I am a witness that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load being lifted.”<sup>215</sup> See D&C 20:77, 79; 3 Nephi 18:7; 20:8.

***Temple Worship.*** Worship in the temple regularly. If this is not a feasible option, still keep your temple recommend current and cherish having it. Elder Tad R. Callister wrote, “An integral part of the temple experience is the making of covenants. Why? Because faithful observance of those covenants can help to bring about the broken heart and contrite spirit that allow us to more fully enjoy the infinite blessings of the Atonement.”<sup>216</sup> Elder Richard G. Scott has taught, “when we keep the temple covenants we have made and when we live righteously in order to maintain the blessings promised by those ordinances, then come what may, we have no reason to worry or to feel despondent.”<sup>217</sup>

214. Thomas S. Monson, “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” General Conference, April 2017, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2017/04/the-power-of-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>.

215. Melvin J. Ballard, as quoted in Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 293.

216. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 296.

217. Richard G. Scott, “Temple Worship: The Source of Strength and Power

***Speak with an Ecclesiastical Leader—Priesthood Blessings.*** A powerful source of healing moral wounds for Latter-day Saints is found in the authoritative discourse with ecclesiastical leaders or by receiving a priesthood blessing. A final pronouncement of release from guilt may require a declaration from ecclesiastical authority. For Latter-day Saints, accessing the power of Jesus Christ to forgive and absolve the burden and guilt of sin or transgression (to include moral injury) is most commonly done in an interview with a Bishop who is a judge in Israel (D&C 58:17–18). Chaplains should lead LDS service members to their local ecclesiastical leader who has the authority to determine their responsibility for and the severity of a morally injurious event. In speaking with a judge in Israel, LDS service members will understand their leader’s religious authority, and through this networking of pastoral care greater healing and comfort will be offered for even perceived moral infractions.

***Music and Song.*** Engage in worshipful singing or music playing. President James E. Faust commented that part of the spiritual healing process “occurs when we worship through music and song. Singing our beautiful, worshipful hymns is food for our souls. We become of one heart and one mind when we sing praises to the Lord.”<sup>218</sup>

---

in Times of Need,” General Conference, April 2009, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/04/temple-worship-the-source-of-strength-and-power-in-times-of-need?lang=eng>.

218. James E. Faust, “Spiritual Healing,” General Conference, April 1992, accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1992/04/spiritual-healing?lang=eng>.

## Conclusion

The transgression of moral beliefs is an issue that humanity has encountered for thousands of years. However, the modern approach to researching and understanding the impact of those transgressions, through perpetration or betrayal as seen in the recent construct of moral injury is rather new. For decades, a primary clinical focus for mental health professionals regarding war related trauma has been on PTSD and the psychological impact of triggering-traumatic events from combat experience. In this focus, certain facets of the effects of a service member's combat or war experience (e.g., guilt and shame) were not addressed. These types of moral or spiritual wounds are now being treated by mental health professionals and pastoral caregivers as moral injury. To assist in the process of healing the psychological, emotional, and spiritual wounds of moral injury, a few methods have been investigated which have led to effective treatment (e.g., Adaptive Disclosure).

Healing moral injury is not limited to these practices. Models of moral and spiritual healing are found in the major theistic religions of the world within their doctrines and practices. One model of healing found in Christian religions is through faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. The doctrine of atonement has existed in the Christian tradition for almost two millennia and there are multiple interpretations of how the suffering and death of Jesus Christ provides hope, help, and healing for individuals. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, coming unto Christ as a method of healing is not a new concept. Methods of its application to a variety of life experiences are found within the LDS scripture canon as well as in current teachings of church leaders and prominent members of

the Church.

Both the current models for healing developed by mental health professionals and the proposed healing model within the guidebook have overlapping principles (e.g., forgiveness). These methods are not mutually exclusive and can be used to supplement one another in the pursuit of healing moral injury. This guide is meant to help chaplains as pastoral caregivers collaborate with mental health professionals in assisting service members in their process of recovery from moral injury. Hopefully the material herein will generate a greater dialogue regarding how pastoral care and personal faith can be used to help service members and veterans in their healing process.

## Recommended Reading List

### **Moral Injury, Trauma, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.**

Bradley, Rusty. *Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds*. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2011.

Brock, Rita Nakashima and Gabriella Lettini. *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012.

Dewey, Larry. *War and Redemption: Treatment and Recovery in Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004.

Fry, Ronald. *Hammerhead Six: How Green Berets Waged an Unconventional War Against the Taliban To Win in Afghanistan's Deadly Pech Valley*. New York, NY: Hachette Books, 2016.

Grossman, David A. *On Killing: The Psychological Costs of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, revised edition. New York, NY: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown, and Company, 2009.

Jensen, Wollom A. and James M. Childs, Jr. *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016.

Joseph, Stephen. *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011.



Kraft, Heidi Squier. *Rule Number Two: Lessons I Learned in a Combat Hospital*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.

Marlantes, Karl. *What It Is Like to Go to War*. New York, NY: Grove Press, 2011.

Shay, Johnathan. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York, NY: Atheneum Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994.

Shay, Johnathan. *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2002.

Sherman, Nancy. *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Tick, Edward. *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2005.

Tick, Edward. *Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2014.

van der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014.

### **Jesus Christ and Gospel Learning.**

Bednar, David A. *Increase in Learning*. Salt Lake City, UT:

Deseret Book Company, 2011.

Callister, Tad R. *The Infinite Atonement*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000.

Christofferson, D. Todd. “The Doctrine of Christ.” General Conference, April 2012. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-doctrine-of-christ?lang=eng>.

Holland, Jeffrey R. *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1997.

Holland, Jeffrey R. “Lessons from Liberty Jail.” BYU Speeches, September 7, 2008. [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland\\_lessons-liberty-jail/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_lessons-liberty-jail/).

Nelson, Russel M. “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives.” General Conference, April 2017. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2017/04/drawing-the-power-of-jesus-christ-into-our-lives?lang=eng#note13>.

Oaks, Dallin H. “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.” General Conference, October 2015. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/strengthened-by-the-atonement-of-jesus-christ?lang=eng>.

Talmage, James E. *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.

## Bibliography

- Adsit, Chris. *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual: Christ-centered Solutions for Combat Trauma*. Newport News, VA: Military Ministry Press, 2007.
- Alexander, Thomas G. "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine." *Sunstone* 5, no. 4 (July- August 1980): 24–33.
- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980.
- . *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition, revised. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987.
- . *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994.
- . *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, text revision. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.
- . *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013.
- . "What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?" Reviewed by Ranna Parekh, July 2015.

Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2017. Accessed January 31, 2017. [https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd?\\_ga=1.51676201.1226557283.1485890924](https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd?_ga=1.51676201.1226557283.1485890924).

Antal, Chris J. and Kathy Winings. "Moral Injury, Soul Repair, and Creating a Place for Grace." *Religious Education* 110, no. 4 (July–September 2015): 382–394.

"Approaching Mormon Doctrine." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom. May 7, 2007. Accessed February 14, 2017. <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine>.

Bednar, David A. *Increase in Learning*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2011.

Benson, Ezra Taft. "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet." BYU Speeches, February 26, 1980. Accessed March 11, 2017. [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson\\_fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson_fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/).

Bogacz, Ted. "War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-22: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock'." *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 2, Studies on War (April 1989): 227–256.

Bracken, Patrick J. "Post-Modernity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." *Social Science and Medicine* 53, no. 6 (2001): 733–743.

- Brock, Rita Nakashima and Gabriella Lettini. *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012.
- Bryan, AnnaBelle O., Jaqueline L. Theriault, and Craig J. Bryan. "Self-Forgiveness, Posttraumatic Stress, and Suicide Attempts Among Military Personnel and Veterans." *Traumatology* 21, no. 1 (2015): 40–46.
- Callister, Tad R. *The Infinite Atonement*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000.
- Carey, Lindsay B., Timothy J. Hodgson, Lillian Krikheli, Rachel Y. Soh, Annie-Rose Armour, Taranjeet K. Singh, and Cassandra G. Impiombato. "Moral Injury, Spiritual Care and the Role of Chaplains: An Exploratory Scoping Review of Literature and Resources." *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 4 (August 2016): 1218–1245.
- Christofferson, D. Todd. "The Doctrine of Christ." General Conference, April 2012. Accessed February 24, 2017. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-doctrine-of-christ?lang=eng>.
- Currier, Joseph M., Jason M. Holland, Kent Drescher, and David Fry. "Initial Psychometric Evaluation of the Moral Injury Questionnaire—Military Version." *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy* 22, no. 1 (2015): 54–63.

Currier, Joseph M., Wesley McCormick, and Kent D. Drescher. "How Do Morally Injurious Event Occur? A Qualitative Analysis of Perspectives of Veterans with PTSD." *Traumatology* 21, no. 2 (June 2015): 106–116.

Currier, Joseph M., Jason M. Holland, and Jesse Malott. "Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 71, no. 3 (2015): 229–240.

Dewey, Larry. *War and Redemption: Treatment and Recovery in Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004.

*Doctrines of the Gospel: Student Manual*, 2nd edition. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010.

Drescher, Kent D., David W. Foy, Caroline Kelly, Anna Leshner, Kerrie Schutz, and Brett Litz. "An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans." *Traumatology* 17, no. 1 (March 2011): 8–13.

Edmonds, Bill Russell. *God is Not Here: A Soldier's Struggle with Torture, Trauma, and the Moral Injuries of War*. New York, NY: Pegasus Books LLC, 2015.

Frankfurt, Sheila and Patricia Frazier. "A Review of Research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans." *Military Psychology* 28, no. 5 (2016): 318–330.

Freeman, Daniel and Jason Freeman. *Anxiety: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Friedman, Matthew J. "History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5." Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/history-of-ptsd-vets.asp>.

———. "PTSD History and Overview." Accessed February 25, 2017. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/ptsd-overview.asp>.

Givens, Terryl L. *Wrestling the Angel*, Vol 1., The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Gray, Matt J., Yonit Schorr, William Nash, Leslie Lebowitz, Amy Amidon, Amy Lansing, Melissa Maglione, Ariel J. Lang, and Brett T. Litz. "Adaptive Disclosure: An Open Trial of a Novel Exposure-Based Intervention for Service Members with Combat-Related Psychological Stress Injuries." *Behavior Therapy* 43, no. 2 (2012): 407–415.

Grossman, David A. *On Killing: The Psychological Costs of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, revised edition. New York, NY: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown, and Company, 2009.

Hansen, Lorin K. "The 'Moral' Atonement as a Mormon Interpretation." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 195–227.

- Harris, J. Irene, Crystal L. Park, Joseph M. Currier, Timothy J. Usset, and Cory D. Voecks. "Moral Injury and Psycho-Spiritual Development: Considering the Developmental Context." *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 2, no. 4 (2015): 1–11.
- Henning, Kris R. and B. Christopher Frueh. "Combat Guilt and Its Relationship to PTSD Symptoms." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 53, no. 8 (December 1997): 801–808.
- Holland, Jeffrey R. *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1997.
- . "Lessons from Liberty Jail." BYU Speeches, September 7, 2008. Accessed March 29, 2017. [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland\\_lessons-liberty-jail/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_lessons-liberty-jail/).
- . "The Laborers in the Vineyard." General Conference, April 2012. Accessed March 26, 2017. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-laborers-in-the-vineyard?lang=eng>.
- Hufford, David J., Matthew J. Fritts, and Jeffrey E. Rhodes. "Spiritual Fitness." *Military Medicine* 175, no. 8S (August 2010): 73–87.
- Jensen, Wollom A. and James M. Childs, Jr. *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016.



- Jones, Edgar. "Historical Approaches to Post-Combat Disorders." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 361 (March 24, 2006): 533–542.
- Joseph, Stephen. *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011.
- Kienzler, Hanna. "Debating War-Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena." *Social Science and Medicine* 67, no. 2 (2008): 218–227.
- Litz, Brett T., Leslie Lebowitz, Matt J. Gray, and William P. Nash. *Adaptive Disclosure: A New Treatment for Military Trauma, Loss, and Moral Injury*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2016.
- Litz, Brett T., Nathan Stein, Eileen Delaney, Leslie Lebowitz, William P. Nash, Caroline Silva, and Shira Maguen. "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy." *Clinical Psychology Review* 29, no. 8 (December 2009): 695–706.
- Maguen, Shira and Brett Litz. "Moral Injury in the Context of War." PTSD: National Center for PTSD, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Last updated February 23, 2016. Assessed February 20, 2017. [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral\\_injury\\_at\\_war.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp).

———. “Moral Injury in Veterans of War.” *PTSD Research Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2012): 1–6. Marlantes, Karl. *What It Is Like to Go to War*. New York, NY: Grove Press, 2011.

Maxwell, Neal A. “Applying the Atoning Blood of Christ”. General Conference, October 1997. Accessed March 20, 2017. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1997/10/apply-the-atoning-blood-of-christ?lang=eng>.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th edition. Hoboken: Wiley, 2016. Millet, Robert L. “Defining Doctrine: A Response to Loyd Ericson.” *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 1–7.

Millet, Robert L. “Defining Doctrine: A Response to Loyd Ericson.” *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 1–7.

———. “What Is Our Doctrine?” In *By Study and By Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator*, 69–89. Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009.

“Moral Injury” (podcast-transcript). Radio Health Journal featuring Dr. Brett Litz and Dr. William Nash. January 18, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2017. <https://radiohealthjournal.wordpress.com/2015/01/18/15-03->

story-1-moral-injury/#more-273.

Nash, William P. and Brett T. Litz. “Moral Injury: A Mechanism for War-Related Psychological Trauma in Military Family Members.” *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 16, no. 4 (December 2013): 365–375.

Nash, William P., Teresa L. Marino Carper, Mary Alice Mills, Teresa Au, Abigail Goldsmith, and Brett T. Litz. “Psychometric Evaluation of the Moral Injury Events Scale.” *Military Medicine* 178, no. 6 (June 2013): 646–652.

Nix, Dayne. “Chaplains Advising Warfighters on Culture and Religion.” In *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement and Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments*, 43–62. Edited by Eric Patterson. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2014.

Oaks, Dallin H. “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.” General Conference, October 2015. Accessed March 20, 2017. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/strengthened-by-the-atonement-of-jesus-christ?lang=eng>.

———. “The Great Plan of Happiness.” *Ensign*, November 1993. Accessed March 18, 2017. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1993/11/the-great-plan-of-happiness?lang=eng>.

- Pargament, Kenneth I., Harold G. Koenig, and Lisa M. Perez. "The Many Methods of Religious Coping: Development and Initial Validation of the RCOPE." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 58, no. 4 (April 2000): 519–543.
- Patton, John. "Forgiveness in Pastoral Care and Counseling." In *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 281–295. Edited by Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000.
- Paul, Lisa A., Daniel F. Gros, Martha Strachan, Glenna Worsham, Edna B. Foa, and Ron Acierno. "Prolonged Exposure for Guilt and Shame in a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 68, no. 3 (2014): 277–286.
- Pols, Hans. "The Tunisian Campaign, War Neuroses, and the Reorientation of American Psychiatry During World War II." *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 19, no. 6 (November/December 2011): 313–320.
- Preach My Gospel*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004.
- Purcell, Natalie, Christopher J. Koenig, Jeane Bosch, and Shira Maguen. "Veterans' Perspectives on the Psychosocial Impact of Killing in War." *The Counseling Psychologist* 44, no. 7 (2016): 1062–1099.

Radzik, Linda. *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Richards, P. Scott and Allen E. Bergin. *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 2nd edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2005.

———. “Religious Diversity and Psychotherapy: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Future Directions.” In *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*, 2nd edition, 475–487. Edited by P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2014.

———. “Toward Religious and Spiritual Competency for Mental Health Professionals.” In *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*, 2nd edition, 3–19. Edited by P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2014.

Rye, Mark S., Kenneth I. Pargament, M. Amir Ali, Guy L. Beck, Elliot N. Dorff, Charles Hallisey, Vasudha Narayanan, and James G. Williams, “Religious Perspectives on Forgiveness.” In *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 17–40. Edited by Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000.

Schmiechen, Peter. *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005.

- Seddon, Rachel L., Edgar Jones, and Neil Greenburg. "The Role of Chaplains in Maintaining the Psychological Health of Military Personnel: An Historical and Contemporary Perspective." *Military Medicine* 176, no. 12 (December 2011): 1357–1361.
- Shay, Johnathan. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York, NY: Atheneum Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994.
- . "Moral Injury." *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 31, no. 2 (2014): 182–191.
- . *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2002.
- Sherman, Nancy. *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Stein, Nathan R., Mary Alice Mills, Kimberly Arditte, Crystal Mendoza, Adam M. Borah, Patricia A. Resick, Brett T. Litz, and the STRONG STAR Consortium. "A Scheme for Categorizing Traumatic Military Events." *Behavior Modification* 36, no. 6 (2012): 787–807.
- Sweat, Anthony R., Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat. "Evaluating Latter-day Saint Doctrine." In *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes: 45th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 23–44. Edited by Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and

Barbara Morgan Gardner. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2016.

Talmage, James E. *The Articles of Faith*, 1924 edition. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982.

———. *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.

Tick, Edward. “Military Service, Moral Injury, and Spiritual Wounding.” *The Military Chaplaincy* 89, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 4–8.

———. *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation’s Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2005.

———. *Warrior’s Return: Restoring the Soul After War*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2014.

*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004.

U.S. Department of Defense. “Religious Affairs in Joint Operations.” JP 1-05. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, November 20, 2013.

- U.S. Department of the Air Force. "Chaplain Planning and Organizing." AFI 52-101. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Air Force, December 2013.
- . "Chaplain, Chaplain Corps Readiness." AFI 52-104. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Air Force, August 2015.
- U.S. Department of the Army. "Army Chaplain Corps Activities." AR 165-1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, June 2015.
- U.S. Department of the Navy. "Professional Naval Chaplaincy." SEC NAV INSTRUCTION 5351.1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy. April 2011.
- . "Religious Ministry in the Navy." OPNAV INSTRUCTION 1730.1E. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, April 2012.
- U.S. General Military Law. "U.S. Code, Title 10." 2007.
- van der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014.
- Vargas, Alison Flipse, Thomas Hanson, Douglas Kraus, Kent Drescher, and David Foy. "Moral Injury Themes in Combat Veterans' Narrative Responses From the National Vietnam Veterans' Readjustment Study." *Traumatology* 19, no. 3 (2013): 243–250.



Wessely, Simon. "Twentieth-Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown." *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 2 (April 2006): 296–286.

Worthington, Jr., Everett L. and Diane Langberg. "Religious Considerations and Self- Forgiveness in Treating Complex Trauma and Moral Injury in Present and Former Soldiers." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 40, no. 4 (2012): 274–288.





Tyler Rickenbach, *BYU-Idaho Army ROTC Fall 2015 FTX*, October 23, 2015, used with permission.rexburg temple.jpg



*Moral Injury and the Atonement of Jesus Christ:  
An LDS Guide for Healing the Wounded Soul*  
was created as the Final Project in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements for a Masters of Arts Chaplaincy at Brigham Young University by Austin J. Bowler © 2017. All Rights Reserved. For questions, feedback, and input for future application, please contact Austin via email: [austin.bowler08@gmail.com](mailto:austin.bowler08@gmail.com).

