

When Faith Has Been Both Wound and Resource

Holding complexity when a tradition has given both beauty and harm.

A Complicated Inheritance

For many people, religion is not simply good or bad. It may have offered comfort, music, prayer, moral vision, belonging, beauty, service, sacred story, and a language for transcendence. It may also have carried shame, fear, coercion, exclusion, silence, spiritual abuse, or emotional harm.

When faith has been both wound and resource, the inner work can be especially complicated. A person may feel pressure to choose one version of the story: either the tradition was good and should be defended, or it was harmful and should be rejected entirely.

Spiritual direction can help make room for a more truthful account.

Holding Both Without Collapsing Either

Honoring what was life-giving does not excuse harm. Naming harm does not require denying every gift. The work is to let the story become large enough to hold both gratitude and grief, reverence and anger, memory and freedom.

This may involve careful discernment. Some elements of a tradition may remain nourishing. Others may need to be released. Some practices may need to be reclaimed differently. Others may no longer be safe or honest to continue.

Questions for Reflection

- What did this tradition give me that I still value?
- What did it cost me?
- What parts of my spirituality were shaped by love?
- What parts were shaped by fear?
- What can be honored without being idealized?
- What needs to be named without being minimized?

A Closing Reflection

Maturity may mean refusing a simplified story. When faith has been both wound and resource, healing may require a truthful tenderness: enough courage to

name harm, enough freedom to honor beauty, and enough honesty to choose what can be carried forward.