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**Pulled from the shoreline in search of spacious spirituality: Journeys of spiritual distress resilience and posttraumatic growth for women of evangelical Christian backgrounds in a Canadian context****Emma De Vynck***University of Calgary, Canada*

**Statement of the Problem:** Religion and spirituality (R/S) provide profound opportunities for healing, resilience, meaning making and posttraumatic growth (PTG) following trauma. Still, R/S may also be the precursors and/or sources of harm, resulting in spiritual distress (SD). While much research has considered the positive mental health impacts of R/S, its potential harms are far less investigated. Addressing this gap, this article draws on findings from an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study with four adult women of evangelical Christian (EC) backgrounds who have experienced SD.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** Participants were recruited using snowball sampling and participated in semi-structured online interviews. A qualitative approach was employed, and analysis was completed using IPA. As IPA places emphasis on the lived experience and textured meaning-making of individuals, it was a strong fit for this study.

**Findings:** The women's stories revealed SD as an isolating and profoundly tension-filled experience characterized by painful relational loss, fraught belonging, existential uncertainty, and acute spiritual pain. An ocean-themed model was revealed through the analysis, demonstrating four fluid phases of the SD journey, underpinned by undercurrents of isolation and loss, and opposing tides, or tensions. Several women used the term "trauma" to describe their experiences. For the women, spirituality served as both a cause and perpetuator of trauma, and as a vehicle for transcendent meaning making in response to wounding.

**Conclusion & Significance:** Ultimately, spirituality is tangled in the women's distress, while also playing a role in their posttraumatic growth. Implications include a call for increased awareness and advocacy regarding SD, as well as a trauma-informed, spiritually sensitive, curious posture from practitioners supporting clients with SD to foster posttraumatic growth (PTG).

**Biography**

Emma De Vynck is a graduate of the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work. Her MSW thesis informed this publication and was supervised by Heather M Boynton and Victoria F Burns. Emma is passionate about deep dives into spirituality, mental health, and transformation, and their intersections. She hopes to continue her academic explorations into matters of the spirit through phenomenological inquiry. She currently works as a mental health clinician with children and youth in northern British Columbia, Canada.