

Clericalism: Enabler of Clergy Sexual Abuse

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Sexual abuse by Catholic clergy and religious has become the greatest challenge facing Catholicism since the Reformation. Violations of clerical celibacy have occurred throughout history. The institutional church remains defensive while scholars in the behavioral and social sciences probe deeply into the nature of institutional Catholicism, searching for meaningful explanations for the dysfunctional sexual behavior. Clericalism which has traditionally led to deep-seated societal attitudes about the role of the clergy in religious and secular society, explains in part why widespread abuse has apparently been allowed. Clericalism has a profound emotional and psychological influence on victims, church leadership, and secular society. It has enabled the psychological duress experienced by victims which explains why many have remained silent for years. It has also inspired societal denial which has impeded many from accepting clergy sexual abuse as a serious and even horrific crime.

KEY WORDS: clericalism; Roman Catholic Church; clergy sexual abuse; narcissism.

To fully understand both the origins and the complex impact of the contemporary clergy sexual abuse scandal, one must understand some of the more subtle yet powerful inner workings of institutionalized Catholicism. Above all, one must appreciate the nature of *clericalism* and the impact it has had on Catholic life in general but especially on the victims of clergy sexual abuse.

Catholicism is a spiritual force, a way of life, and a religious movement. It is also a complex socio-cultural reality and a world-wide political entity. It has the power to touch the spiritual, moral, emotional, psychic, and economic lives of members and non-members alike. It has had more impact on world history than any other religious body. The world-wide Catholic Church, with a membership

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exceeding one billion, is ruled by a unique sub-group known as *the clergy*. In fact, in the minds of many, the church is identified with the clergy.

Clericalism refers to the radical misunderstanding of the place of clerics (deacons, priests, bishops) in the Catholic Church and in secular society. This pejorative "*ism*" is grounded in the erroneous belief that clerics constitute an elite group and, because of their powers as sacramental ministers, they are superior to the laity. These spiritual powers have historically led to a variety of social privileges which in turn have regularly resulted in different levels of corruption (Sanchez, 1972).

The distorted notion of the power and standing of clerics is not new. The negative impact of the clerical culture has been acknowledged for centuries. Well known Catholic writer Russell Shaw says:

Yet the clericalist mind set does fundamentally distort, disrupt, and poison the Christian lives of members of the church, clergy and laity alike, and weakens the church in her mission to the world. Clericalism is not the cause of every problem in the church, but it causes many and is a factor in many more. Time and again... it plays a role in the debilitating controversies that today afflict the Catholic community in the United States and other countries. (Shaw, 1993, p. 13)

Following the Second Vatican Council many clergy and Catholic laity hoped that the power of clericalism would wane, especially in light of the Council's emphasis on the role of lay members in Church life (Cullinane, 1997). Yet recent studies indicate that the present generation of young priests see themselves as essentially different from the laity and as men set apart by God (Hoge, 2002). It appears from this and other indicators that Catholic clericalism is alive, malignant, and prospering.

There is a causal relationship between clericalism and sexual abuse on several levels. This has been acknowledged by a variety of observers, most notably the National Review Board appointed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (National Review Board, 2004). Their report acknowledged the impact of clericalism on specific levels, namely the tendency of the hierarchy to protect priests, the tendency to cover reports in deep secrecy and the massive denial about the seriousness of the problem.

Careful study of the clergy sexual abuse issue from all angles reveals the impact of clericalism throughout. One can distinguish these levels as follows:

The victim. Many have reported an initial attitude of disbelief joined with an intense fear of resisting the abuser and afterwards, disclosing the abuse. Many also reported intense feelings of guilt at having been responsible for a cleric's sexual sin. Finally, the belief that the priest is identified with God often causes such a profound sense of betrayal and loss that victims' spiritual lives are forever damaged, often fatally.

The damage. Some experts believe that sexual abuse of Catholic children by clerics is especially harmful because of the victim's belief that the cleric takes the place of God (DeGiulio, 2002).

The parents and family. Victims have reported a variety of reactions from parents upon disclosure of clergy sexual abuse. Some reported that parents refused to believe them.

Others reported being punished for speaking ill of a priest and others that parents seemed to believe them yet felt helpless and unable to report the abuse to church or secular authorities.

Church authorities. The influence is complex. The attitude of self-importance and belief in their own "specialness" prevents many clerics from seeing beyond their own self-protection to the intense damage inflicted on victims and scandal to society.

The Catholic Laity. The tendency among the laity to deny, minimize, or excuse the extent and seriousness of the clergy abuse scandal can be attributed to traditional attitudes about the priesthood and the authority of bishops.

Secular authorities. Often secular law enforcement and judicial authorities offered much more lenient treatment to offending clerics with the excuse that they did not want to cause harm to the church. This same deferential attitude is evident when clerics are given penalties far more lenient than lay sex offenders.

The present scandal is not defined solely as a problem with sexually dysfunctional and emotionally disturbed clerics. First and foremost it is a problem of profound abuse of ecclesiastical power. Finally, the way the institutional church has reacted to it reveals a deep flaw in the role of organized religion in contemporary society.

Catholicism entered one of the most tumultuous eras in its history in the second half of the twentieth century. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) occurred at a time when nations and cultures worldwide saw intense social and political upheaval. Every aspect of this multi-faceted societal change impacted the Catholic Church. The structural, disciplinary, and theological changes that began with the Vatican council met with wonder, hope, confusion, and even hostility by forces throughout the church from the top of the power structure to the ranks of the laity. A definite peak moment in the tumult has been the on-going revelation of widespread sexual harassment and abuse of children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults by Catholic clergy members. Although the primary focus has been on perpetrating priests, sexual abusers have been discovered in all ranks—deacons, bishops, archbishops and at least one cardinal.

The horror of discovering that thousands of clerics had sexually abused tens of thousands of vulnerable children and adults was exceeded only by the revelation that the hierarchical leadership knew, covered up, and even facilitated sexual abuse by moving known perpetrators from parish to parish and diocese to diocese. It is well documented that this bizarre phenomenon is hardly isolated to the United States and other English speaking countries as some Vatican and other church officials have charged. Sexual dysfunction is not limited to nationality or geographic locale. In spite of its historical ability to tightly control the thoughts and actions of believers, the Catholic hierarchy has been astounded by the fact that it has not been able to control the victims of clergy sexual abuse nor the adverse and sometimes violent reaction in Catholic and secular society alike.

After finding the institutional church's bureaucracy and canonical legal system not only unresponsive but often re-victimizing, the abused began to approach civil attorneys in hopes of finding a means of stopping the perpetrating clerics and getting the hierarchy's attention to the incredible human wreckage it was allowing

in its midst. Having found essential support from the secular media, victims discovered that the civil legal system was increasingly responsive and able to afford them credibility and relief.

The combination of extensive media coverage and sometimes aggressive legal tactics has resulted in a series of painful and even shocking revelations about the institutional Catholic Church, the emotional and psychological state of the clergy, and the woefully immature nature of the belief systems of countless Catholics.

The contemporary chapter of the Church's centuries old struggle with sexually abusive clerics and religious began in the mid eighties with the prosecution of a serial pedophile in Louisiana. This touched off a process of exposure and discovery that Church officials were hardly able to stem or even control. The exposure of sexually abusive clerics became a steady feature in the secular media. There were major explosions along the way: the Mount Cashel scandal (St. John's Newfoundland, 1980–89), the James Porter case (Massachusetts, 1993), the Santa Barbara seminary cases (1993), the fall of the Irish government under Prime Minister Albert Reynolds (1994), the resignation of Vienna's Cardinal Hans Hermann Groer (1995), the Rudy Kos trial (Dallas, 1997), widespread sexual abuse and suicide of several victims of Fr. Sean Fortune (Ferns, Ireland, 1999). These events and others drew widespread media attention with the resulting shock and disgust on the part of the Catholic and general public, yet none seemed to have the effect of a widespread mobilization to get to the bottom of the problem and end the nightmare.

The public capacity to absorb report after report of clergy sexual malfeasance reached the saturation point by January, 2002. The *Boston Globe's* front page revelation of the long standing coverup of the sexual crimes of the late Fr. John Geoghan revealed that the simmering anger of the Catholic population and indeed the general population as well had reached critical mass. The *Globe's* investigation touched off a nationwide response that was intense and angry and within a short time had reached the hallowed halls of the Vatican.

The foremost question of course, has been "Why?" The Catholic laity and society in general have been dumbfounded by the consistently inadequate response by the institutional Catholic Church's leadership to the seemingly unending series of horrific cases of sexual assault. How can the oldest and largest Christian body respond in such a bureaucratic and self-serving manner to the profoundly hypocritical and destructive epidemic of sexual violation of the young and vulnerable by the very persons whom they have been taught to revere and trust? Why have bishops gone to such lengths to protect themselves while ignoring the plight of the victims? Finally, why has the pope himself shown such concern for the bishops and given only passing acknowledgment to the victims?

Violations of clerical celibacy are not new to this era. The Church's own legal documentation reveals a steady stream of disciplinary pronouncements from the papacy and the bishops beginning in the fourth century and extending through to

the present day. At no time however has society ever reacted as it has in the present. The behavioral and social sciences, the legal profession, ethicists, theologians, and even scripture scholars are looking for explanations. To the shock of the hierarchy, from the papacy on down to local bishops, ecclesiastical leadership is *not* in control as it always had been in the past. Outside forces are probing relentlessly into the complex nature of the Church in hopes of preventing this or similar debacles from ever happening again.

Apart from the etiology of sexual dysfunction, which is primarily a scientific-medical issue, scholarly critics are taking a hard look at the very structures that have enabled the hidden culture of sexual abuse. There is ample evidence to conclude that the concept of *clericalism* is at the root of much that ails the contemporary church, especially the clergy sexual abuse scandal.

Theologian Hans Kung asserts, probably rightly so, that there is no biblical evidence that Jesus Christ ever intentionally founded an institutional church (Kung, 2001). Nevertheless official Catholic dogma and canon law both state that the institutional church is of divine origin in that it was founded by Jesus Christ acting on the will of the Father. There is a significant degree of scholarly consensus that the Christian community's understanding of itself changed after the official recognition of Christianity *as a religion* by the emperor Constantine in the fourth century (Kung, 2001). The way of life inspired by Jesus Christ, known throughout history as *Christianity*, has evolved in tandem with a human political structure which is best described as the "institutional church." The tension between these two realities has never been more obvious than in the response to the contemporary scandal.

The institutional Catholic church is made up of two groups: the laity and the clergy. The canonical description itself sets the tone:

Canon 207, 1. Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers, who are also called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful, who are also called laity. (Coriden, Green Heintschel, 1985, p. 130).

The "sacred ministers" referred to are the deacons, priests, and bishops. All are members of the clerical state, a sub-culture within the visible church community. Although the clergy constitute a minuscule fraction (.00042%) of the world's Catholic population, they wield all power in the Church. The vast majority of the approximately 430,000 Catholic clerics in the world are celibates and all are male. The entire ruling class, all bishops and above, are celibate males. No married clerics, married lay people, or women hold any positions of power or influence anywhere in the Catholic Church. Throughout history the institutional Church has been governed *in toto* by the clerical estate. The Church's governmental structure is *hierarchical* by definition, and, according to official Catholic teaching, intended so by divine will. All power is held by individual office-holders who are ordained clerics. Unlike the American governmental system, there is no separation of powers

into distinct entities. The pope embodies the fullness of all judicial, executive, and legislative power for the world-wide church. His power extends over the entire Church but also reaches directly into each diocese or geographic region. In their respective dioceses, the bishops too hold a similar fullness of power subject only to limitations included in general law or imposed by the pope. In effect, the Catholic Church is a monarchy. Since the earliest centuries the clergy have been an *aristocracy*. Like all monarchies, power flowed from top to bottom. The central focus of attention has always been the "*good of the church*" which in reality has often meant the good of the hierarchy. The hierarchy is what political scientists call the *leadership elite* of the Catholic church. As such, it has fallen prey to a serious fault common to many governing elites, especially monarchies. It has identified its own needs as the needs of the wider political body. In the case of the institutional Catholic Church, the hierarchical elite has identified "the church" as itself.

The survival of an attitude of superiority on the part of the clergy is not surprising in light of the fact that the very political structure of the Church was a natural parent. Early in its history the institutional church began to construct a theology of sacred orders (deacon, priest, bishop) that supported the isolation of clerics into a special caste and easily led to the negative philosophy of clericalism. The common conception, evident from theological and catechetical writings, church law and liturgical practice, is that bishops are direct descendants of the apostles and both bishops and priests are ontologically different from lay persons because they have been singled out by God to represent Jesus Christ on earth. In spite of the lack of concrete historical evidence of such singularity, this theology developed, filling the scriptural gaps with such assertions as "it is the constant tradition that . . ." About Apostolic succession, Kung writes:

It is historically impossible to find in the initial phase of Christianity an unbroken chain of laying on of hands from the apostles to the present-day bishops. Historically rather, it can be demonstrated that in a first postapostolic phase, local presbyter-bishops became established alongside prophets, teachers, and other ministers as the sole leaders of the Christian communities; thus a division between "clergy" and "laity" took place at an early stage. (Kung, 2001, p. 21)

The self-identification of clerics with the favor of the Almighty led to a variety of social and legal privileges, expected deference, vast power, and an aura of fear. The following excerpt, from the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (1566), epitomized the theology with which Catholics have traditionally been indoctrinated about the priesthood:

In the first place, then, the faithful should be shown how great is the dignity and excellence of this sacrament considered in its highest degree, the priesthood. Bishops and priests being, as they are, God's interpreters and ambassadors, empowered in his name to teach mankind the divine law and the rules of conduct and holding, as they do, His place on earth, it is evident that no nobler function than theirs can be imagined. Justly therefore are they called not only Angles, but even gods, because of the fact that they exercise in our midst the power and prerogatives of the immortal God. In all ages priests have been held in the highest honor; yet the priests of the New testament far exceed all others. For the power of

consecrating and offering the body and blood of our Lord and of forgiving sins, which has been conferred on them, not only has nothing equal or like it on earth, but even surpasses human reason and understanding. (McHugh & Callen, 1923, p. 318).

Although there is ample historical evidence to clearly demonstrate that priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes remain human in spite of the sacred ceremonies that elevate them to their lofty positions, there persists a belief that erring clerics are somehow above the law and beyond most forms of accountability. In spite of ample evidence of individual and institutionalized corruption, the deep roots of clericalism have enabled the ecclesiastical world to slip into deep denial when faced with the possibility that clerics really are no different and no better than mere mortals.

CELIBACY AND CLERICALISM

Perhaps the most common misconception about the clergy sexual abuse phenomenon has been that it is caused by mandatory celibacy. It is both naive and even preposterous to assume that the inability to turn to women for sexual release causes clerics to prey on children or adolescents. Mandatory celibacy alone does not cause sexual dysfunction. However, there is a definite relationship between celibacy, the clericalist mystique, and the emotional health of priests.

It is not the lack of sexual contact itself that causes the dysfunction. Even scholarly critics of the Church's traditional practice agree that healthy celibacy is possible for those who freely choose it. The first part of the celibacy problem surfaces when one looks at the complex justification used for clerical celibacy and the formation to which prospective celibate clerics were traditionally subjected. Although celibacy is a church-created law (universally imposed at the Second Lateran Council in 1139) and not grounded in scripture, it has traditionally been framed by Church authorities in such a way that it appears to be essential to authentic priesthood and clerical life (John Paul II, 2002). In spite of twenty centuries of documented evidence of violations of clerical celibacy and constant but unsuccessful official attempts at curbing them, the papacy has resisted all attempts to seriously study the wisdom of imposing mandatory celibacy on clerics. Indeed, as recently as January, 2004, Pope John Paul II told a group of French bishops that celibacy is an essential dimension of the priesthood (John Paul II, 2004).

The Church has traditionally taught that celibacy is necessary because the priest-cleric must be removed from all distractions and totally dedicated to God's service. Furthermore, since Catholic ministry is centered in the priesthood, the most important part of which is the celebration of the Eucharist, there are also historic and contemporary appeals to the concept of ritual purity. Non-revisionist historical studies reveal another, much more pragmatic support for celibacy: the

retention of clerics' property by the church, the elimination of clerics' progeny as a challenge to hierarchical authority, and the maintenance of power.

Clerics are taught from the seminary onward that celibacy makes them superior to the non-celibate because it requires a higher degree of internal strength and dedication which is given to the elect by God. Consequently, celibacy is a kind of clerical garb that fortifies the illusion that clerics are ontologically superior and set apart. It enhances the wall of secrecy and adds to the mystique about the clerical world.

Traditional preparation for clerical celibacy involved the exaltation of the values of virginity and total continence, a devaluation of intimacy and marriage, and the surrounding of human sexuality with a blanket of sin. All sexuality was considered from the context of morality and all violations in thought, word or deed were, for ordained clerics, a double mortal sin. On the one hand the violation was considered grave matter because *all* sexual sins are grave. However since the cleric's person was consecrated to God, the sexual violation also constituted a sacrilege. Studies of the emotional and psychic health of seminarians and priests have shown that the traditional formation system produced a significant degree of emotional and sexual immaturity (Baars, 1971; Kennedy & Heckler, 1972; Sipe, 1990, 1995, 2003; Cozzens, 2000, 2002). Kennedy and Heckler for example, found that 66% of U.S. priests were underdeveloped and 8% maldeveloped. The authors stated that these men have not resolved the psychosexual issues and problems which are usually worked through in adolescence (Kennedy & Heckler, 1972, p. 11).

Although the present chapter in the age-old drama of problematic celibacy has often been referred to as a "pedophile crisis" the evidence thus far shows that true pedophiles constitute about 20% of the offenders while the remaining sexual abuse victims have been adolescents or vulnerable adults. If we consider pedophiles separately since pedophilia is presently classified as a true psycho-sexual disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), then it is possible to conclude that most other forms of true sexual abuse are directly related to clerical psycho-sexual and emotional immaturity (Benson, 1994; Cozzens, 2000).

Historically the Catholic clerical estate has operated as a secretive aristocracy. The public sees the clerical facade created by distinctive dress, ceremonial robes, societal deference, and religious power. Behind the high walls of the clerical subculture there exists a dimension of life hidden from the public and it is in this hidden life that sexual dysfunction is both nurtured and enabled (Sipe, 1990). The mystique surrounding mandatory celibacy constitutes a major if not *the* major source of support for this hidden clerical world with its power and privilege. Celibates are led to believe that they are superior to those who have sexual relations, including married people. They are taught that they are gifted with a special God-given grace to enable them to live on this higher plane. The priest's most sublime duty is to celebrate the Eucharist and in so doing he is actually taking the place

of Christ. Although several popes were married and most priests of the eastern Catholic rites are married, the Latin rite Catholic leadership continues to insist on the essential nature of celibacy as a kind of ritual purity. Pope John Paul II has vigorously defended priestly celibacy to the point of cutting off all discussion of possible change. At a ceremony in the Vatican, Archbishop (now cardinal) Francis Stafford delivered a paper entitled "The Eucharistic Foundation of Sacerdotal Celibacy" (Stafford, 1993). In this astounding essay the author postulates the theory that a priest must be celibate because he takes the place of Christ as he celebrates the Eucharist and in so doing takes part in an irrevocable covenant union with what he calls the "new Eve," meaning the Church:

It is because of the priest's own nuptial integration into the sacrifice he offers that only a man is capable of acting in the person of the head and can be a priest . . . He cannot marry without that betrayal of his own nuptiality, which is analogously adulterous; his exclusive dedication to the bride of Christ bars any secondary self-donation. (Stafford, 1993).

Stafford's argument is a direct reflection of the John Paul II's doctrine on celibacy as set forth in his 1992 letter, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. As a theoretical justification for mandatory celibacy, it forges an essential dependency relationship between the concept of priesthood and the sexually pure state. In spite of the historical fact of married apostles, popes, bishops, and priests for significant periods of Church history, as well as the contemporary reality of married Eastern rite priests and married former Anglican priests, this theology is proposed as the divinely inspired justification not only for mandatory celibacy but for an all-male priesthood. Since the papal letter and Stafford's lecture make no mention of the legitimate exceptions to this supposedly God-given rule, one can only wonder if, following this theological path, the Eucharistic celebrations presided over by married clerics are somehow less valid or less real than those conducted by celibates.

The insistence of mandatory celibacy is self-serving for the clerical culture. It is a kind of clerical garb that sets those who wear it apart and above all others. It can cause the celibate to actually believe that he is ontologically superior to others because his celibacy enables him to assume a higher degree of worthiness, required to move into the Holy of Holies and communicate with the Almighty. Somehow the entire argument seems not only foreign but outlandish when one visualizes the ministry of Jesus, exercised not above but in the midst of people. It is an example of what Cardinal Avery Dulles refers to as the "regressive method" of theological study whereby the contemporary teaching is presumed to be an indication of what *must* have been present from the beginning (Dulles, 2002). In other words, theological research is considered authentic only if it discovers or contrives ways to support the present doctrinal formulations.

No matter how eloquently mandatory celibacy is articulated nor how abstract the justifications become (as in Cardinal Stafford's lecture), actual lived experience

and professionally gathered data confirm that, in ways direct and indirect, it is a major cause of dysfunction in the clerical world. Many of the clerical abusers of the past two decades were products of the traditional seminary system which began on the high school level. Here we find males who are entering puberty, isolated in an all-male environment with an institutionalized negativity (or even hostility) toward marriage, sexual contacts, intimate relationships, and women. The idea was that men could be best prepared to accept and live a celibate life if they were cut off from all contact or even discussion of the sexual dimension of humanity. The seminarians were young boys whose meaningful emotional and sexual development was paused at a most crucial age. As they progressed to ordination some left the seminary but those who remained were expected to have thoroughly internalized the theory of celibacy. Upon completion of their formation, these men were thrust into the world and expected to live a totally chaste life. Their maturation had been effectively stopped in their early teens. Many were, what one priest referred to as "the best educated 14 year olds in our society . . . young teenagers in the bodies of men." They had been given no guidance for maturing into a life whereby chaste celibacy would be a freely made choice (O'Dea, 2004; Cozzens, 2000). Many of these men would go on to become sexually involved with young adolescents. Most of the chosen partners were males while a significant minority were female. These are not the true pedophiles but can perhaps be classified as a type of dysfunctional abuser unique to the Catholic clergy.

CLERICAL NARCISSISM

A look at the nine diagnostic criteria for the narcissistic personality disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), a cursory review of some basic literature on narcissism (Lasch, 1979; Vaknin, 2003) and a reflection on some of the aspects of the Catholic clerical world point to a pervasive degree of narcissism on the corporate or societal level as well as on the part of individuals. Even the various liturgical rituals reflect the institutionalization of cleric's need to be center stage. The priest is clearly the central focus of the Mass while bishops and cardinals take on the role of medieval monarchs at liturgical celebrations. All of this is of course justified by the theology of the priesthood wherein the priest is the "alter Christus" or "other Christ." The cleric is equipped by his indoctrination and training with certain essential symptoms of narcissism, especially the "grandiose sense of self-importance," (criterion 1), belief that he [or she] is special (criterion 3), "is interpersonally exploitive" (criterion 6), "lacks empathy" (criterion 7) and finally, "shows arrogant, haughty behaviors and attitudes" (criterion 9) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p). Certainly these criteria do not apply to all clerics but that is not the point. At issue is the fact that clerical narcissism is painfully obvious and as such, plays a significant role in the sexual abuse scandal. One

could even opine that this institutionalized narcissism is not only present in the celibate clerical culture, but essential for the survival of the clericalist mystique of superiority.

CLERICAL NARCISSISM AND THE VICTIM

The narcissistic cleric fails to grasp the devastation that his sexual abuse causes not only for his victims but for their families and the church community in general. Many victims have testified that their perpetrators convinced them that the sexual activity was special because it was "with Father." Others have testified that the perpetrators actually intimidated and threatened them with divinely inspired retribution in this life or the next for speaking ill of a priest. Outrageous as it is, some clerics' understanding of human sexuality is so deficient that they simply cannot comprehend the profound impact of the power of the priesthood on the youthful vulnerable victim. As a result of the church's teaching on sexuality, all sexual behavior is reduced to a matter of the will. The sexually immature cleric, often overwhelmed with both confusion and shame at his sexual activity, cannot (as opposed to will not) fathom the destructive impact of abuse on a young victim. His narcissism causes him to focus only on himself so he often uses his position and power to intimidate the victim into silence.

People ask how victims allowed such abuse to take place or how clerics managed to get away with it, often for prolonged periods of time. The answer is found in the midst of the clericalist mythology about the immense power of the priesthood, a mythology readily believed by Catholics with a need for spiritual security. Yet common perception of the exalted state of bishops and priests is not simply "folk" theology. It is grounded in the Catholic church's official theological teaching as well as its legal (canonical) discipline. It is enmeshed in an age-old heritage that has been initiated by the clerical elite but nurtured by clergy and laity alike. An account of the famous Mount Cashel (Newfoundland, Canada) case contains a statement that aptly sums this up:

The most eloquent insight into how men of the cloth had been able to perpetrate such monstrous crimes against their parishioners' children and get away with it for so long came from a woman whose cultural eyesight was 20/20. She laid the blame for the tragedy on the traditional role of the priest in outport Newfoundland, which she said was as close to God as you could get without playing a harp. Expressing a feeling shared by many of Newfoundland's 205,000 Catholics, she told the meeting: "If a child was born without an arm, people said it was because the mother said something against a priest. That was nonsense, but a priest with that kind of shield could get away with anything. We are victims of our heritage. (Harris, 1990, p. 19).

The narcissistic component of clericalism is especially obvious in the reaction of the hierarchy. The historical perspective serves to put this in sharper focus.

Clergy sexual abuse was first documented at the Council of Elvira (Spain, 309 AD). One of the canons specifically condemned bishops and priests who had

sex with young people. Since that time pronouncements from popes and bishops have regularly confronted celibacy violations and sexual abuse by the clergy. During some periods of church history the institutional leadership was much more open in its recognition of widespread violations of clerical celibacy, many of which were abusive in nature. At other periods the issue was plunged into deep secrecy.

The present era is unique however because there has been an organized response from outside the hierarchy and an insistence from Catholic laity and the non-Catholic public that credible answers be found. Heretofore the immense power of the clerical establishment and the hierarchy in particular had shielded the institutional church from vigorous criticism and the related demands for accountability from the laity and secular society. The hierarchy today have made some perfunctory public apologies and instituted policies and procedures to confront the wave of clergy abuse. The main focus however has been on rooting out offending clerics. In this today's bishops are no different than those of past centuries. Unlike the past however, the bishops are being confronted with demands that they explain their own role in the cover-up of thousands of cases of abuse. This contemporary scrutiny reveals a laity that is growing less and less accepting of the clericalist myth and consequently less subservient. Faced with non-stop demands from the secular media, the academic world, the secular judiciary, law enforcement, and thousands of angry Catholic lay people, the hierarchy's reaction has been defensive and clearly symptomatic of a degree of institutionalized narcissism.

The response from the papacy has been consistently sympathetic to the episcopacy but only minimally responsive to the victims. Several of the twelve public papal statements about the scandal have employed denial and projection in an attempt to shift blame to sources outside the institutional church.

Although the present pope had been fully aware of the present scandal since it broke in 1984, he made no public statement about it until June, 1993. In this letter to American bishops, the pope began with an expression of sympathy for the suffering that the scandal caused them. He solidly anchored the sexual abuse in the context of sin. The victims are given passing mention: "... I fully share your sorrow and concern... especially... for the victims so seriously hurt by these misdeeds" (John Paul II, 1993). There are no suggestions or instructions to reach out to victims and no evidence of a recognition of the devastating nature of the abuse. The letter goes on to recommend canonical penalties for the offenders. The remarkable section of the letter is also the longest paragraph which attempts to shift the cause of the problem from anything within church structures, to the secular media:

I would also draw your attention to another aspect of this whole question. While acknowledging the right to due freedom of information, one cannot acquiesce in treating moral evil as an occasion for sensationalism. Public opinion often feeds on sensationalism and the mass media play a particular role therein. In fact, the search for sensationalism leads to the loss of something which is essential to the morality of society. (John Paul II, 1993)

The next paragraph tells the bishops that they have a serious responsibility to the clerics and the victims but also to "... the whole of society systematically threatened by scandal and those responsible for it." The pope prescribes prayer as the acceptable response and closes with a condescending admonition: "yes dear brothers, America needs much prayer, lest it lose its soul."

This first letter was not followed by others showing the development of a realistic and comprehensive understanding of the clergy abuse problem. It is the first of a series of papal references that re-enforced the denial of reality. The clergy abuse problem is *not* an American cultural problem nor is it the exaggerated creation of the secular media. It is, pure and simple, a Catholic Church problem. The pope sets the tone with this first pronouncement and effectively disowns any institutional responsibility for the fundamental cause of the scandal.

In August 1993 the pope again made a brief mention of the scandal in an address at the World Youth Day in Denver. Here he said that the first and foremost response should be prayer. (Niebuhr, 1993).

The clericalist forces of the Vatican, obviously taking their lead from the pontiff, have unleashed a series of unofficial yet public statements aimed first at minimizing the damage and then at shifting the blame. At first they claimed that this was an American problem stemming from a materialistic society. Then a similar scandal erupted in the Republic of Ireland which resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Albert Reynolds because of his role in a coverup (Goode, McGee, & O'Boyle, 2003). The following year Hans Hermann Cardinal Groer, Archbishop of Vienna, was accused to demanding sexual favors from schoolboys and seminarians. In spite of his protestations that it was all defamation by the press, he was forced to step down and was forbidden to publicly exercise any episcopal functions. So much for shifting the blame to the Americans!

With reports of clergy sex abuse involving not only priests but bishops surfacing in European countries, further attempts by the Vatican to scapegoat the U.S. or the English speaking world would obviously fail. The pope's next utterance on the subject was also clericalist in tone yet with a different focus.

This time he broached the issue in an address at the Vatican to the assembled Irish bishops. He commends the victims to the bishops' prayers but places the emphasis on expressing sympathy for the priests who suffer "... due to the pressure of the surrounding culture and the terrible scandal given by some of their brother priests ..." (John Paul II, 1999). He goes on to defend mandatory celibacy against calls for change, attributing the criticism to a false notion of the church:

These scandals, and a sociological rather than a theological concept of the Church, sometimes lead to calls for a change in the discipline of celibacy. However we cannot overlook the fact that the Church recognizes God's will through the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit and that the Church's living tradition constitutes a clear affirmation of the consonance of celibacy, for profound theological and anthropological reasons, with the sacramental character of the priesthood. (John Paul II, 1999)

The pope's 2002 Holy Thursday Letter to the world's priests repeated the theme of support for innocent priests, decrying the "dark shadow of suspicion" that is cast over innocent priests. He mentions the church's concern for the victims ("As the Church shows its concern for the victims . . .") as if it were a reality and ends with a call to prayer.

The fury unleashed by the *Boston Globe's* revelations in January 2002 prompted the Vatican to take the historically unprecedented step of summoning the American Cardinals to Rome for a meeting. After two days of intense conferences the Pope addressed the assembly which consisted of the American Cardinals and several other prelates from the U.S. and the Vatican. This address is noteworthy only because it added two new elements to the projection defenses employed by the pope. The pope was no doubt responding to the excuses offered by the cardinals for the state of affairs, and in doing so he reinforced one of the bishops' standard themes: that they had acted on insufficient knowledge of the nature of the problem and responded to incorrect medical advice: "It is true that a generalized lack of knowledge of the nature of the problem and also at times the advice of clinical experts led bishops to make decisions which subsequent events showed to be wrong." (John Paul II, 2002). In the next paragraph he returns to a theme found in many of his statements, namely the societal responsibility for the clergy sex abuse scandal: "The abuse of the young is a grave symptom of a crisis affecting not only the church but society as a whole. It is a deep-seated crisis of sexual morality, even human relationships, and its prime victims are the family and the young." (John Paul II, 2002).

The generalized reference to society's superficial understanding of the effects and nature of child sexual abuse and the attempt to shift blame to the medical community lended support an unsupportable position repeated often by US bishops. The claim of lack of knowledge of the nature of the problem quickly wilts when one reviews eighteen centuries of official church pronouncements condemning clergy sexual abuse of the young. In addition, the fact that such abuse has been specifically singled out in the church's own legal code books reflects an unquestioned awareness of the gravity of such acts even if they are framed only in a moral context. In secular society, sexual abuse of the young and of adults is considered a serious crime in every legal system, a fact hardly lost on bishops.

The reference to incomplete or incorrect medical advice is particularly troublesome in light of public disclosures by two members of the staff of the Institute for the Living (Hartford, Connecticut) that bishops had regularly withheld essential information from psychiatrists and psychologists and had either intentionally misinterpreted medical reports or totally ignored psychiatrists' recommendations (Rich & Hamilton, 2002; Lothstein, 2004).

As if taking their lead from the pope, high ranking prelates from within the Vatican and from other countries have issued statements condemning the secular media. One cardinal (Maradiaga of Honduras) even went so far as to

compare American press coverage to ancient Roman persecutions and to the modern persecutions under Hitler and Stalin. Similar remarks were made by the Cardinal-archbishops of Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and Madrid, and by Archbishop Julian Herranz of the Vatican. Back home, retired cardinal Avery Dulles, a life-long academic who has never held a pastoral position of any kind, was reported by the *Boston Herald* to have said "I don't think there is any great crisis in the U.S. Its practically no news. To the extent it's a crisis, its created by the news media." (Sullivan & Convey, 2002). Even Bishop Wilton Gregory, President of the U.S. Bishops Conference and a man presumably better informed on the abuse crisis than any prelate in the Vatican or abroad, reinforced the aura of narcissistic projection with a statement in 2004:

I think the media last year did help the church to take some steps that will bring this terrible stain out of her life . . . However the way the story was so obsessively covered resulted in unnecessary damage to the bishops and the entire Catholic community. (Silver, 2003)

The persistence of the denial and the arrogant tone of the hierarchical response leads to the tentative conclusion that the question is not one of a conscious refusal of the bishops to see and acknowledge the devastation to the victims and the church but of their *inability* to do so. The barrier to such consciousness is the narcissistic essence of their own clerical system.

The narcissistic response continues to erode the general credibility of the U.S. episcopate and the Vatican as well. Another target has been those who disagree with the institutional church on doctrinal matters. The bishops are clearly not accustomed to having anyone disagree with them much less challenge them on doctrinal matters. Some bishops and certain of their clerical and lay supporters have made vague and unsubstantiated allegations that dissenting forces within the church as well as critics from without, have used the scandal to achieve their own agendas. Bishop Gregory's words, delivered at the conclusion of the November 2002 gathering of the bishops, echo this sentiment:

As bishops, we should have no illusions about the intent of some people who have shown more than a casual interest in the discord we have experienced within the church this year. There are those outside the church who are hostile to the very principles and teachings that the church espouses, and who have chosen this moment to advance the acceptance of practices and ways of life that the church cannot and will never condone. Sadly, even among the baptized, there are those at extremes within the church who have chosen to exploit the vulnerability of the bishops at this moment to advance their own agendas. (Associated Press, 2002).

The bishops have used two other narcissistic defenses that have backfired as far as their credibility is concerned, and also caused deep hurt to victims and some of their supporters. The first of these is the attempt to reverse the victim-victimizer role and the other is the devaluation of critics. The reversal technique has been employed by bishops who have tried to portray themselves as targets of media defamation and legal persecution. Devaluation occurs when

the motivation of well-meaning critics is questioned or even worse, when slander is used to divert attention from an unacceptable message. The most outrageous example of such devaluation was aimed at former Governor Frank Keating after he had resigned as chair of the National Review Board. The governor had bluntly criticized the bishops' manipulative and secretive techniques. After he resigned the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City sent a private message to a Chicago priest alleging that Keating was not faithful in attending Sunday mass, disagreed with the local archbishop on doctrinal issues (the death penalty), and was conducting an adulterous affair. The message quickly made its way to the archbishop of Chicago and to Bishop Gregory. Governor Keating was understandably outraged and the bishops' overall moral standing suffered another demotion.

Finally, this narcissism is most painfully evident when Church leaders have unsuccessfully tried to shift the blame to the victims or their parents (Doyle, 2003).

The response of the Church's governing structure to the world-wide revelations of thousands of cases of sexual abuse represents more than a defensive reaction by an institutional system hell-bent at preserving its power. It is a clash of values represented by two diametrically opposed governmental systems. The Catholic church is the world's sole surviving absolute monarchy. Its ruling elite, the cardinals and bishops, constitute an aristocracy. The essence of this political structure is clearly expressed in a 1906 Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius X, the sentiments of which are echoed in the present Code of Canon Law. The papal letter, addressed to the French bishops in support of their opposition to the separation of Church and State, is classic:

It follows that the Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led and, like docile flock, to follow the Pastors. (Pius X, 1906)

Though there are numerous bishops and priests who are and always have been exemplary as unselfish and totally dedicated servants of Christ, the system itself, of which they are a part, represents an anachronistic way of governing that is dramatically out of step with a modern world that sees democracy as the more fitting manner of governance. Abuse victims today, unlike those of the past, have been raised in democratic societies that have championed the intrinsic value of the individual. Empowered by their democratic experience and enabled by the common law system, victims and their supporters have challenged the very autonomy of the institutional church. The hierarchy, many of whom either consciously or sub-consciously believe in the distinction enunciated by Pope Pius X, have defended the traditional system as the only possible response to the divinely inspired plan for the church.

CLERICALISM AND THE VICTIM

There are three aspects of clerical abuse that seem directly related to clericalism: the *seduction of the victim*, the *lack of resistance* to prolonged abuse and, the *inability to report*.

I have been an expert witness and/or consultant on several hundred clergy abuse cases from throughout the United States. I have also had extensive experience with cases in Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and Spain. I have had direct or indirect contact with thousands of victims over a twenty year period. I have observed several aspects of clergy abuse that are common to most victims and appear unique to abuse by Catholic clergy. Herein lies the probability of a direct connection between clericalism and clergy sexual abuse.

Seduction and Grooming

Nearly all Catholic clergy abuse victims come from devout families who are often deeply involved in the life of the institutional church. Such families have generally internalized the belief that priests are exalted and superior personages. It is considered a great honor when the priest singles out the son or daughter of such a family for particular attention. Parents have generally been completely unsuspecting of the attention paid to a young son or daughter and have even unwittingly enabled the abuse by allowing and encouraging overnight trips and the like. This process is commonly referred to as "courtship" or "grooming." Eventually the cleric makes the first sexual move and the young victim is, more often than not, stunned into disbelief.

Victims reared in an atmosphere that accepted the traditional Church teaching on sexuality were convinced and could not question the belief that any form of sexual expression, be it thought, word or especially deed, is mortally sinful. Furthermore they were taught that homosexuality is officially deemed unnatural, homosexual people "objectively disordered" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994) and all sexual expression particularly sinful and "intrinsically disordered" (Ratzinger, 1986). In the face of this the priest, the personification of this stringent sexual morality and one who is theoretically devoid of any potential for sexual temptation, is the very one leading the victim into a forbidden sexual act. The victim is now caught in a powerful dilemma. He or she has been groomed and led along to a place of significant trust. Now, something forbidden has happened. Confusion, guilt, and shame set in after the shock begins to wear off. The guilt and confusion is especially toxic if the young victim has experienced pleasurable sexual feelings. The moral theology taught by the clerical world came forth from a source that did not understand much less accept the complex nature of the sexual response. This plunges the victim into deeper confusion. The clerical world has also taught the victim that the only acceptable relief from the guilt of sin is

confession and absolution given by the priest. But the very source of relief from sin is also the efficient cause of the sin so the victim is immobilized and the guilt, shame, and trauma only intensify.

Non-resistance to Prolonged Abuse

By far most sexual abuse is not limited to an isolated act. Perpetrators often claim it only happened once but subsequent investigation generally discovers patterns of abuse over days, weeks, and sometimes years. Observers often wonder, and rightly so, how some victims remain in such "relationships." Many victims have later reported that they felt trapped and increasingly powerless as the abuse continued. Some reported being conscious of a sort of bond with the abuser which of course further confused the issue by increasing ambivalence and guilt. Uninformed critics have frequently claimed that in such cases the victim was indeed a willing participant and perhaps even an aggressor. The pathological dynamic of the relationship suggests that such suggestions are far from the truth and constitute only defensive, wishful thinking by those incapable of accepting the reality of the scandal.

This inability to resist prolonged abuse is best explained by the psychological phenomenon known as the *trauma bond*. Dr. William Foote, a psychologist from Arizona and a medical expert on several clergy sexual abuse cases, has explored the phenomenon whereby a kind of relationship or bond is created between a clerical sexual abuser and his victim. The term was first used by Dr. David Dutton, a Canadian psychologist who had done extensive research on domestic violence and child abuse. According to Dr. Foote, Dutton describes traumatic bonding as:

... the development of strong emotional ties between two persons, with one person intermittently harassing, beating, threatening, abusing or intimidating the other. Dr. Dutton notes that this phenomenon is based on the existence of a power imbalance wherein the maltreated person perceives him or herself to be subjugated to be dominated by the other. (Foote, 1998, p. 11)

Catholic victims, conditioned by their religious indoctrination, look on the clergy-abuser with a mixture of awe and fear. The cleric's attitude of superiority and power elicit a certain degree of emotional security in the victim. These strong feelings of security and awe at the clerical state often impede victims from recognizing the seductive patterns the abuser is using to court them. The awe, fear, and wonder experienced by the victim is best described as *religious duress*. This is a kind of fear inspired in victims that so constrains them that they cannot extricate themselves from abusers. In many ways *religious duress* is similar to the notion of *reverential fear*, a well established category in Catholic Canon Law. This is a fear that is induced not from an unjust force from without

but from the respect, awe, or reverence one has for an authority figure. The victim experiences such fear of causing the displeasure or even wrath of the authority figure that the will is significantly impeded. Child or adolescent victims are especially vulnerable to a priest-abuser. First, the priest is an adult with automatic power over the victim. He is also a priest with vast spiritual authority. Another component that often enters into the relationship is secrecy. The seduction process has created a secret and special relationship that entraps the victim.

The trauma bond becomes stronger and even more pathological as the exploitive relationship continues. It is often affirmed in the victim's view, by the Church's apparent approval of the priest's behavior. The clerical world, unwilling or unable to proactively confront clergy sexual abuse, appears to the victim to be unconcerned. The victim feels trapped until either the abuser ends the relationship or some other event from without causes it to terminate. In some instances the abuse had grown so repulsive to the victims that they broke the bond and fled.

Failure to Report

The existence of the trauma bond also explains why so many victims failed to report abuse after it started and even for months or years after it had ended. They did not report because they *could not* report. Apart from the fear and shame that often arose from sexual abuse, victims had to deal with the entire Catholic institution that loomed before them. Many believed their abusers who convinced them that no one would believe them. Still others succumbed to implied or direct intimidation and threats from church authorities. The clerical elite, incapable of seeing a victim's report of sexual abuse as anything more than a threat to the Church's security, often responded in a predictable manner. The victim was often turned into a potential victimizer and made to feel guilty for contemplating an action that would embarrass a priest.

SPIRITUAL DAMAGE TO THE VICTIMS

Sexual abuse is always traumatic but when the abuser is a trusted religious leader the trauma is more profound. The impact on Catholic victims is unique and, in the opinion of some experts, particularly devastating precisely because the abuser is a priest. Catholic victims, brought up in a church dominated by clerics, believe the teachings that priests take the place of Christ. In the minds and emotions of the victims the priest is much more than a pastor or minister. He is a very special father figure and the earthly representative of God Himself. Many victims experience a kind of toxic transference and experience in their sexual

abuse a form of spiritual death. Lothstein graphically describes it:

The difference is that the role of the priest puts the priest in close connection with Jesus and with god. And what you hear from the victims, and I've heard this from priests who have been victims, is that they feel that their soul has been murdered. It's soul murder, soul murder, and they can never get over the guilt and shame of what their responsible role was—why was I chosen, how did this happen to me, and can I ever be reconnected with god? (DeGiulio, 2002).

Victims describe the spiritual impact of abuse by a priest in many ways but the common denominator is spiritual devastation and, as Lothstein puts it so well, *soul murder*. For many the aftermath is a lifetime of painful loss and acute emptiness. These victims were almost universally devout, believing, and in most cases religiously naive Catholics. Sexual abuse by God's personal representative is often described as a ripping away of their souls. For others their lives are filled with a painful anger that roars to life whenever they see a priest or some other reminder of their abuse. Victims regularly report panic attacks when in or near a church, nausea and violent anxiety reactions to seeing or hearing a priest, and even anger at God that He has somehow violated them and then abandoned them. For some a measure of peace is won when they leave the Catholic church, often by means of some symbolic gesture such as renouncing their baptism. And yet there are some clergy abuse victims who fight back, defiantly stating that no priest or bishop can tear their faith away from them. The visible symptoms may vary dramatically but the root cause is the same: added to the already traumatic experience of sexual abuse is the deeper and often more painful trauma of spiritual abuse. Clericalism set the victims up by convincing them that the priests were super-human, hovering somewhere between mortals and gods. Then it facilitated the destruction of their faith when the priests betrayed them.

Ironically the institutional Church has not addressed the spiritual loss suffered by abuse victims. While it is true that the pope and some bishops have issued the expected statements expressing sorrow and regret, none have said anything that reflects an empathic comprehension of the spiritual damage done (McLaughlin, 2004). The shocking response of the official church has in fact become the catalyst for much of the angry reaction by victims, supporters, and laity in general. Abused by the individual priests, victims did what came naturally to them. They went to Church officials, fully expecting credibility and a compassionate response. Most have said that all they wanted was assurance that "Father would get help and be put someplace where he could not hurt anyone else." Victims may have been angry, even furious with the priest but initially most were able to distinguish the abuser from the church in general. They were forced into an adversarial role when, much to their surprise, the bishops and other church bureaucrats rejected them. It was only when the victims had reached the point of complete frustration with the non-responsive and manipulative church bureaucracy that they turned to the civil courts for relief. In most instances their civil attorneys ended up playing the compassionate and sympathetic role that the victims expected from their spiritual leaders.

CLERICALISM'S INFLUENCE ON THE HIERARCHICAL RESPONSE

There is agreement that clericalism has had a profound influence on every level of the clergy abuse scandal in this country and elsewhere. The section above describing narcissistic clericalism in the institution describes this in part.

One of the most puzzling and scandalous aspects of this crisis has been the response of the institutional church's leadership. This response, which ranges from seemingly non-caring diffidence to outright hostility with occasional instances of true concern, has served to both re-victimize victims and intensify the spiritual damage. The Church's bishops have reacted to the tens of thousands of victims as administrators and bureaucrats and not as caring pastors. Most bishops have had little if any meaningful contact with victims, often appearing afraid of the confrontations. One Midwestern archbishop, speaking through his Vicar General, offered to meet with victims. All they had to do was call his secretary to arrange for an appointment. Such a response reflects a callous, business-like attitude, devoid of even the slightest insight into the role a bishop *should* play when one of his "flock" has been severely damaged by a priest. This too is narcissistic clericalism of the episcopal variation. Another archbishop rejected suggestions that he meet with individuals and small groups of victims because he feared they would not respect him and become angry. Yet another cardinal archbishop of a major east-coast archdiocese admitted before a grand jury that he had never met a victim face-to-face. When asked why not, he replied that it would not be an efficient use of his time.

Sidestepping the astonishment that normal people experience when hearing such stories, one can only wonder at the power of a force that could mute the moral outrage one would expect at the spectrum of a scandal as devastating and morally shocking as the present abuse debacle. Tens of thousands of men and women have had their bodies violated and their souls demolished by dysfunctional clerics, and then to make it worse, if such were possible, they are ignored and often re-victimized by the very religious leaders consecrated to protect them.

Traditionally the institutional church has responded to the various forms of sexual abuse in two ways: with legislation intended to curb the offenders and with exhortatory statements, also intended to persuade obedience to the Church's moral norms and celibacy legislation. There is no historical evidence of a major effort to bring compassionate pastoral and spiritual care to the victims. In the present era the papal pronouncements have made passing mention of the victims. The Bishops, in the U.S. and abroad, have expressed regret and issued numerous public apologies to victims. Yet the victims and their support organizations see this as little more than duplicitous rhetoric. Reports from victims who have appeared before local diocesan lay boards are generally critical of such boards, complaining of a lack of genuine compassion and an overly suspicious and bureaucratic approach. Many also cite the on-going harsh response when victims enter into civil suits against dioceses.

The victims and the general public are demanding, with increasing vehemence, that the papacy and the bishops provide in-depth, comprehensive, and comprehensible answers as to why so many dysfunctional clerics have created such widespread havoc. But more important, they are asking why the hierarchy not only allowed it to happen but responded with a blanket of cover-up, lies, manipulation, and re-victimization. The hierarchy, steeped in clericalism, instinctively responds in a defensive and arrogant manner because their security and power is threatened today more than at any other time in centuries. The bishops, in their attempts at controlling the scandal, which they often erroneously refer to as a crisis, have concentrated their efforts on the abusers. The concrete thrust of the USCCB efforts has primarily been the swift removal of any cleric accused to sexual abuse. The "One Strike" policy appears to have been a defensive public relations attempt to convince the critics and the general public that the bishops recognize the problem and are doing something about it. In effect, the institutional response is also an example of clericalism of the episcopal variety. The accused priests are expendable but when asked how the bishops will respond when other bishops are accused of blatant cover-up or even sexual abuse, the hierarchical leaders promised concrete action by means of "fraternal correction." This is hardly more than a tap on the wrist and is meaningless in the overall context and further evidence of the hierarchy's resistance to any form of self-examination.

THE CLERICALIST ENABLERS

Russell Shaw, in his 1993 study of Catholic clericalism, says that the laity are in some ways more clericalized than the clergy (Shaw, 1993). Prior to the present era (1984 onward) the bishops handled clergy sex abuse cases in a highly secretive manner, effectively preventing media coverage, criminal prosecution, and civil suits. This would not have been possible without the cooperation of the laity who often believed that their cooperation with the bishops in such cover-ups was helping the church. "Church" to lay enablers and clerical cheerleaders, is primarily defined as the hierarchy. Without a base of such support the clerical aristocracy would fade.

Lay clericalism is grounded in an antiquated ecclesiology, or understanding of the Church. *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, issued by Vatican Council II in December, 1965, defined the Church as essentially the "People of God." Although it still distinguished between the institutional dimension and the spiritual reality, the definition remains radical and has been resisted since the close of the council. The resistance is largely based on the threat posed by the shift in power from the bishops to the community. The clergy control the sacraments and the sacraments are the source of spiritual security for the laity. In essence, threats to the hierarchical power cartel are threats to the personal security of individuals. Clericalism has managed to trap adult Catholics in an infantile

religious web. When they break out of this web they challenge and threaten the clericalist estate.

The present scandal has provided abundant evidence of lay clericalist enabling. Apart from media, judicial, and law enforcement cooperation with bishops, some lay individuals and groups have sought to attribute the roots of the scandal to disobedience to the pope and the hierarchy. Some have blamed the crisis on a spirit of dissent that arose after the close of the Vatican Council II in 1965 (Weigel, 2002). They focus on the departure from traditional Catholic teachings about sexual matters, especially contraception. In their view, this coincided with the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and these two social phenomena worked together to corrupt the ideals of the priesthood and create an environment that enabled clergy sexual abuse (Groeschel, 2002). Others have maintained that the clergy sexual abuse problem is grounded in a failure of clerics to be faithful to their vows. In their view, the apparent broad-based acceptance of homosexuality in the priesthood is closely allied with same-sex abuse by members of the clergy. Attempts to explain the scandal solely in terms of rejection of traditional moral norms, disobedience to papal authority, or infidelity to vows of celibacy are symptomatic of an unwillingness or more probably, an inability, to understand the complex nature of the scandal. It is as if all of life, especially Catholic life, can be reduced to the single virtue of obedience and the single sin of sex. The clericalist lay enablers have shown no believable comprehension much less sympathy for the victims. They have approached the problem in the same black and white manner that many Catholics consider the only way to look at life: obey the clergy without question for they are nominated by God to lead us.

THE FUTURE

The present clergy abuse scandal has been a terribly painful catalyst to the most substantial upheaval Catholicism has seen since the sixteenth century Reformation. The revelation of thousands of dysfunctional clerics roaming free in Catholic communities over the past several decades has prompted a powerful response from a lay population that is no longer subservient and accepting of whatever the church leadership dictated. Contemporary Catholics, especially those in the English speaking world, have been empowered by democracy and by the social movements that have redefined society and culture over the past fifty years. Many find it spiritually and socially incongruous to bow before religious personages simply because they claim to be set apart and special.

This phenomenon has exposed clericalism for the malignant disease that it really is. Ironically some of the harshest critics are clerics themselves . . . men and women whose membership in the Catholic or Protestant clerical elite is far secondary to their commitment to the Christian message and mission. In a remarkable book, Fr. Donald Cozzens writes,

Clericalism . . . is always dysfunctional and haughty, crippling the spiritual and emotional maturity of the priest, bishop or deacon caught in its web. Clericalism may command a superficial deference, but it blocks honest human communication and ultimately leaves the cleric practicing it isolated. (Cozzens, 2002, p. 117)

At no time in the past millennium has the Christian message ever been more sorely needed by the very institutions that carry its name. The institutional Catholic church, identified by many with the papacy and the bishops, will continue to flounder and self-destruct so long as its response to this profoundly destructive scandal is directed at its own preservation. Traditionally and today this is the definitive proof of the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of clericalism. When the institutional church and not only individual priests and bishops within it, openly proclaims the welfare and spiritual healing of the countless clergy abuse victims to be its first priority, then it will begin to emerge from the dark shadows of the clericalist museum into the hope-giving light of Christianity.

It is fitting to conclude these questions and observations with Christ's words from Matthew's gospel: "*It is not sacrifice I desire, but mercy.*"

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