

The background of the cover features several faint, stylized leaf motifs in a light green color, arranged in a diagonal pattern from the top-left to the bottom-right. The main title is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

SIN AGAINST THE INNOCENTS

**Sexual Abuse by Priests and the Role
of the Catholic Church**

Thomas G. Plante

The logo consists of a stylized green leafy branch to the left of the text. The word "Greenwood" is written in a large, elegant, dark green serif font, and "PUBLISHING GROUP" is written in a smaller, dark green, all-caps sans-serif font below it.

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Sin against the Innocents

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**SIN AGAINST THE
INNOCENTS**

*Sexual Abuse by Priests and the Role
of the Catholic Church*

Edited by Thomas G. Plante

Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality
J. Harold Ellens, Series Editor

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*Dedicated to the memory of Curtis Bryant, S.J., Ph.D.,
friend, colleague, and contributor to this book. He
helped so many people troubled by clergy sexual
misconduct.*

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SERIES FOREWORD

The interface between psychology, religion, and spirituality has been of great interest to scholars for a century. In the last three decades a broad popular appetite has developed for books that make practical sense out of the sophisticated research on these three subjects. Freud expressed an essentially deconstructive perspective on this matter and indicated that he saw the relationship between human psychology and religion to be a destructive interaction. Jung, on the other hand, was quite sure that these three aspects of the human spirit—psychology, religion, and spirituality—were constructively and inextricably linked. Anton Boisen and Seward Hiltner derived much insight from both Freud and Jung, as well as from Adler and Reik, while pressing the matter forward with gratifying skill and illumination. Boisen and Hiltner fashioned a framework within which the quest for a sound and sensible definition of the interface between psychology, religion, and spirituality might best be described and expressed.¹ We are in their debt.

This series of general interest books, so wisely urged by Greenwood Press, and particularly by its editor, Debbie Carvalko, intends to define the terms and explore the interface of psychology, religion, and spirituality at the operational level of daily human experience. Each volume of the series identifies, analyzes, describes, and evaluates the full range of issues, of both popular and professional interest, that deal with the psychological factors at play in the way religion takes shape and is expressed, in the way spirituality functions within human beings and shapes both religious for-

mation and expression, and the ways that spirituality is shaped and expressed by religion. The primary interest is psychological. In terms of the rubrics of the discipline and the science of psychology, this series of superb volumes investigates the operational dynamics of religion and spirituality.

The verbs *shape* and *express* in the above paragraph refer to the forces that prompt and form religion in persons and communities, as well as to the manifestations of religious behavior in personal forms of spirituality, in acts of spiritually motivated care for society, and in ritual behaviors such as liturgies of worship. In these various aspects of human function the psychological drivers are identified, isolated, and described in terms of the way they unconsciously and consciously operate in religion and spirituality.

The books in this series are written for the general reader, the local library, and the undergraduate university student. They are also of significant interest to the informed professional, particularly in corollary fields. The volumes in this series have great value for clinical settings and treatment models, as well.

This series editor has spent an entire professional lifetime focused specifically upon research into the interface of psychology in religion and spirituality. These matters are of the highest urgency in human affairs today when religious motivation seems to be playing an increasing role, constructively and destructively, in the arena of social ethics, national politics, and world affairs. It is imperative that we find out immediately what the psychopathological factors are that shape a religion that can launch deadly assaults upon the World Trade Center in New York and murder 3,500 people, or a religion that motivates suicide bombers to kill themselves and murder dozens of their neighbors weekly, or a religion that prompts such unjust national policies as preemptive defense; all of which are wreaking havoc upon the social fabric, the democratic processes, the domestic tranquility, the economic stability and productivity, and the legitimate right to freedom from fear, in every nation in the world today.

This present volume, *Sin against the Innocents: Sexual Abuse by Priests and the Role of the Catholic Church*, so carefully researched and crafted by editor Thomas G. Plante and his coauthors, addresses issues equally global but at the same time more personal and close to home. They have seen that it is urgently necessary to discover without any lost time what the psychological factors are that shape a distorted spirituality which can permit trusted and highly esteemed religious leaders to fall into horrendous behaviors that deeply wound and often destroy the lives of innocent and unsuspecting children. This is an urgent and timely work, the motivation for which is surely endorsed enthusiastically by the entire world today, as we increasingly witness the progressive unfolding of this horror of child

abuse by religious practitioners. What is going on in these cases? How are we to understand, stop, and heal this lethal epidemic? The scholars who have prepared this volume have found some answers and share them with us in remarkably readable fashion.

Of course, not all of the influences of religion now or throughout history have been negative. Indeed, most of the impact of the great religions upon human life and culture has been profoundly redemptive and generative of great good. It is just as urgent, therefore, that we discover and understand better what the psychological forces are that empower people of faith and genuine spirituality to give themselves to all the creative and constructive enterprises which, throughout the centuries, have made of human life the humane, ordered, prosperous, and aesthetic experience it can be at its best. Surely the forces for good in both psychology and spirituality far exceed the powers and proclivities toward the evil that we see so prominently in our world today.

This series of Greenwood Press volumes is dedicated to the greater understanding of psychology, religion, and spirituality, and thus to the profound understanding and empowerment of those psycho-spiritual drivers that can help us transcend the malignancy of our pilgrimage and enormously enhance the humaneness and majesty of the human spirit, indeed, the potential for magnificence in human life.

J. Harold Ellens
Series Editor

NOTE

1. Aden, L., & Ellens, J. H. (1990). *Turning points in pastoral care, The legacy of Anton Boisen and Seward Hiltner*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

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PREFACE

Few subjects have received the kind of constant media attention and heated debate than the topic of sex-offending clergy in the Catholic Church. Behind the headlines and media frenzy are too many stories of vulnerable children and teens being sexually exploited by Catholic priests. Furthermore, bishops and other religious superiors have too often failed to protect vulnerable others from abusive clergy and have tried to cover up, deny, or minimize this problem. It is a story about too many bishops (and priests) behaving badly when they are purported to be the moral, religious, and ethical leaders of society. It is a remarkable story. However, it is a complex story that has had little thoughtful, civil, and data-driven scholarship and discourse.

The purpose of this book is to bring together some of the best minds in the world on this topic in order to shed some light on the problem of clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. The book is a companion to an earlier book on this topic which was published by Greenwood Press and edited by me in 1999 titled, *Bless Me Father for I Have Sinned: Perspectives on Sexual Abuse Committed by Roman Catholic Priests*. In that book, leading mental health professionals from the United States and Canada came together to provide a state-of-the-art understanding of priest sex offenders and their victims. In the current volume, we expanded the group to include journalists, theologians, canon lawyers, ethicists, victim advocates, and mental health professionals from the United States, Canada, England, and Italy to better understand the challenges of clergy sexual

abuse in the Roman Catholic Church following the crisis of 2002 in the American Church.

Contributors met for several days during May 2003 at Santa Clara University in northern California to reflect on and discuss the topic and provide feedback to one another regarding their chapter contributions. We hope that this effort resulted in a richness and seamlessness not usually experienced in other edited volumes.

Clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church is a complex issue with few simple and straightforward answers. This book hopes to provide a thoughtful reflection among leading professionals who are very much involved and concerned with various aspects of this problem. We hope that this book will make an important contribution to understanding clergy sexual abuse and perhaps improve the odds that it might become a problem of the past.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people other than the author or editor assist in the completion of a book project. Some contribute in a direct way while others help in a more supportive manner. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the people who worked to make this book idea a reality.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the contributors to this volume. Not only did they complete their chapter contributions in a timely manner but they also traveled to Santa Clara University in California from as far away as Rome to participate in a conference that I hosted on this important topic. The contributors also read one another's chapters and offered feedback to all. Thus, the influence of the group can be seen throughout the book.

Second, it is important to recognize the wonderful people at Greenwood who published this book. Most especially, many thanks go to Debbie Carvalko, our editor at Greenwood.

Third, I would like to thank Santa Clara University for its support of the project and for funding the international conference to allow all the contributors a chance to meet and discuss their work. Funding for the project came from the President's Office (Father Paul Locatelli), the Bannan Center for Jesuit Education (William Spohn, Ph.D., director), the College of Arts and Science (Atom Yee, Ph.D., acting dean), the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (Kirk Hanson, director), and the Moran Family Trust. Additional in-kind support came from the Santa Clara University Center for Professional Development and the Psychology Department.

Fourth, I would like to thank David DeCosse, Ph.D., editorial consultant, for his outstanding editing work with the chapters and filling in for me while I was out of town. I'd also like to thank administrative assistants Jane Najour, Henrietta Matteucci, Patricia Brandt, and Nicole Dutemple for their assistance with the conference.

Fifth, I would like to acknowledge the anonymous victims and clergy referred to in this book who have allowed their life experiences and traumas to become an instrument for learning and reform. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Lori, and son, Zachary, for their love and support while I worked on another compelling book project.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas G. Plante

The year 2002 was *not* a very good year for the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. In fact, it was probably the worst year for the American Catholic Church in memory. Each day throughout the year, beginning with the January 6, 2002, investigative report published on the front page of *The Boston Globe* (*Boston Globe* Investigative Staff, 2002), was greeted with headline stories in newspapers across the country of allegations, convictions, resignations, and cover-ups of priest sex offenders. Just about every newspaper, magazine, and television news program across America (and in many parts of the world) reported on the numerous cases of Catholic priests who sexually abused children and teens during the past several decades. Few stories have had that kind of laser beam of attention by the mass media for so long. For example, the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church was *New York Times* front-page news for 41 consecutive days in 2002. Many people called for the resignation or defrocking of not only the priests accused of sexual misconduct but also of the various bishops, cardinals, and other religious superiors who were responsible for supervising these men and assigning them to their priestly duties. Countless lawsuits were filed on behalf of the victims and victim groups totaling over a billion dollars in claims. Church dioceses, such as the one in Boston, threatened to go bankrupt by filing for Chapter 11 protection. Of course, many potential victims have likely not come forward and thus have not engaged in litigation yet. Laws were altered in numerous states to extend the statutes of limitations so that additional victims could come forward.

One of the major focal points of the anger, resentment, and upset by the public regarding the clergy sexual abuse crisis centered on Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston. Remarkably, 58 Boston-area priests (Paulson, 2002a, 2002b) as well as the 25,000-member, Boston-based Catholic reform organization, Voice of the Faithful, demanded that Cardinal Law resign (Mehren, 2002). Cardinal Law was responsible for supervising several priest sex offenders who apparently abused hundreds of victims over many years. Finally, on December 13, 2002, Pope John Paul II accepted Cardinal Law's resignation. Catholics and non-Catholics alike have been furious with Church leaders for not better protecting unsuspecting children and families from sex-offending priests. Many have felt that the Church considered itself above the law and arrogant in the manner in which it handled this issue over the years. Many have suggested that the Church has lost its moral compass and authority on all topics (e.g., unjust wars, the gap between rich and poor, sexuality) due to the sexual abuse scandals. Calls for reform have also been voiced about other challenging and controversial issues within the Roman Catholic Church such as the prohibitions against female, married, and homosexual priests. It is unlikely that the American Catholic Church has experienced a more difficult crisis in our lifetime (*Boston Globe* Investigative Staff, 2002; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002a). The Catholic Church in the United States has experienced a major earthquake with its epicenter in Boston and yet, many months following the initial quake, the earth still shakes violently.

The problem of clergy sexual abuse among Catholic priests is not a new problem at all. In fact, media attention has centered on this problem in the past. Prior to the crisis of 2002, it was quite well known that a sizable percentage of priests had sexually abused minors (e.g., Plante, 1999a, 1999b; Sipe, 1995). Books and articles on this topic, outlining a variety of problems with priest sex offenders, had been published in both professional and popular press outlets. Several notable and sensational cases have dominated press attention in the past. These include the exploits of Father James Porter in New England as well as Father Gilbert Gauthe in Louisiana. Furthermore, comments about clergy sexual abuse were recorded hundreds and even well over 1,000 years ago.

For example, St. Basil (330–379 C.E.) stated, “A cleric or monk who seduces youths or young boys...is to be publicly flogged...For six months he will languish in prison-like confinement, . . . and he shall never again associate with youths in private conversation nor in counseling them.”

Therefore, sexual abuse committed by Catholic priests is not a new story that only became public in the media storm of 2002.

Research from a variety of reliable sources across North America suggests that six percent or fewer of Roman Catholic priests or other male Catholic clergy such as brothers have had a sexual experience with a minor (e.g., anyone under the age of 18). On the high-estimate side, Sipe (1990, 1995, 1999) states that two percent of priests are pedophiles (i.e., sexual involvement with prepubescent children) and an additional four percent are ephebophiles (i.e., sexual engagement with postpubescent teens). Since there are approximately 46,000 active Catholic priests in the United States, Sipe's figures suggest that approximately 2,700 Catholic priests have been sexually involved with minors. If we include the additional 15,000 retired priests and other male Catholic clergy such as brothers, this figure swells closer to 3,600. Plante (1999a) brought together leading clinicians and researchers from across North America (including Richard Sipe noted above) to participate in an edited book on this topic and in a professional conference held at Santa Clara University. This group agreed that, based on their collective research findings and both clinical and consultative experiences, up to six percent of priests appear to have had sexual experiences with minors. This conference was held in 1998, long before the sex abuse crisis in the Church during 2002.

Other researchers and sources disagree with Sipe's findings. For example, Loftus and Camargo (1993) carefully examined the histories of 1,322 priests over 25 years who were hospitalized at Southdown (a private Canadian psychiatric facility specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of clergy). These researchers reported that 2.7 percent of the treatment population had been sexually engaged with minors. Rossetti (2002a) reports that about one percent of Catholic priests have had a sexual experience with a child and an additional one percent have had a sexual experience with an adolescent, totaling two percent of all Catholic clergy, based on his work at the St. Luke's Institute (the largest American psychiatric facility that evaluates and treats clergy). Jenkins (2001) reports that of the 150,000 active and retired Catholic priests in the United States since 1960, approximately 800 (less than one percent) have experienced credible accusations of sexual abuse of minors. *The New York Times* conducted an evaluation of the available data and published a series of articles starting in January 2003 (Goldstein, 2003). Their research found that 1.8 percent of priests ordained between 1950 and 2001 had credible accusations regarding sexual abuse of minors. The report also found that most of the abuse occurred during the 1970s and 1980s and that most abusers were ordained during