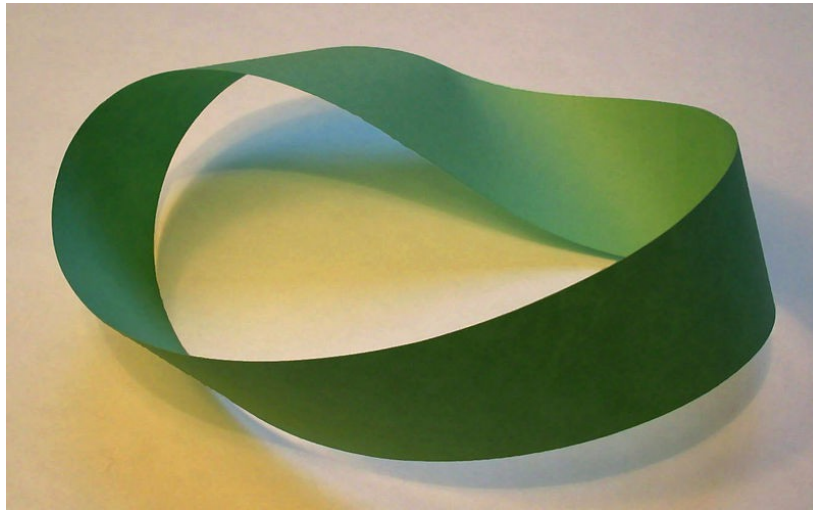


Clergy and Religious Leader Abuses of the Laity

Religious and Spiritual Consequences



Möbius-stripⁱ

When you walk to the edge of all the light you have and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown, you must believe that one of two things will happen. There will be something solid for you to stand upon or you will be taught to fly.

Patrick Overtonⁱⁱ

Introductory Comments

It is possible to identify and to describe the religious aftermaths of sexual abuse done by religious leaders and clergy. It is also possible to identify and to describe the religious aftermaths of clericalism and institutional malfeasance as institutionalized forms of collective abuse and betrayal. Finally, it is possible to identify and describe the religious aftermaths of community denial, betrayal, rejection and aggressive hostility.

It is, therefore, possible in a similar manner to carefully delineate and describe survivors' traumatic responses to their social and personal experiences of sexual, institutional, and social abuses in the spiritual realm.

Therefore we can theoretically separate religious aftermaths of complex forms of abuse from their spiritual aftermaths. We can do this definitional and diagnostic work in three manifestations of abuse inside religious environments:

- The survivor's lived experience of sexual abuse acts (such as rape) done by clergy and other religious institution leaders;
- The survivor's lived experience of institutional denial and attack behaviors as the survivors confront institution managers about their abusive, duplicitous, and complicitous mismanagement of known sexual abusers. In common language this is the result of managers covering up or covering for the sexual abuser's presence inside the institution. Common forms of this according to Doyle include minimization, denial, outright lying, and frontal attacks on the survivors of abuse. Victims of sexual predation by clergy are thus twice abuse and twice betrayed;ⁱⁱⁱ
- The survivor's lived experience of their religious community's disbelief, disdain, victim-blaming and victim-shaming behaviors. These forms of community betrayal are, therefore the third and complicating form of attack behaviors on the survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Caveat

It is important to note, however, that an individual's lived internal experiential reality in these matters will likely be inchoate, confusing and deeply troubled. This is due to the experiential difficulty, after traumatic encounters at a personal level, of separating religious experiences from spiritual experiences. Doing this kind of heuristic separation is, therefore, counter-intuitive.

The Intersection of Teachings and Experience

Some of this difficulty is also due to human perceptions of our lived experiential knowledge. Our internal perceptions are deeply shaped by our mental maps and by our personal and cultural vocabularies of description. In particular, human beings have strong internal perceptions of that which *should be* or *should not be*. Some, if not most of these, are culturally shaped. At times these culturally-constructed should systems interfere with our recognizing that which is. In other words, our human preoccupations with strongly held beliefs about human (or even divine) should-ness overwhelm our ability to deal with the experienced realities of is-ness.

When culturally-implanted ideological should-ness vocabularies overwhelm our internal and experiential felt-sense of the body's physical and emotional is-ness, we get trapped in confusion. Inside interpenetrated and deeply held personal perceptions about the should-ness narrative of our relationships with our own selves (and with the selves of others) we lose our ability to distinguish between the collective forest and its individual trees. Some rape survivors report, for example, a largely unconscious and nearly continuous inner sense after violation and abuse that they will continue to be abused. For these individuals, a felt sense of personal safety often seems, and therefore becomes, illusory.

When, after experienced abuse, this kind of inner expectation develops, we lose our ability to differentiate between abusive behavior and non-abusive behavior. We lose our ability to (1) discern and (2) properly assign realistic responsibility for the abuse we have suffered. Introjected shame, self-guilt and self-blame interfere with our embodied self's abilities to accurately name what has happened to us. It interferes with our ability to properly assign accountability to the rapist or sexual abuse perpetrator. When this happens, the toxic forest of abuse begins to constitute the only individual and social reality that we can recognize. The abuse we have suffered not only exists in the outer world where we first experienced it. It now lives inside of us. When this happens to us, we are subsequently colonized by our experiences of victimization – acts done to us by others but now, in rape's aftermath, done to us by our own body/social/selves.

While the lived experience of interpersonal sexual abuse has wounded us; it is the internalized and deeply- cathected body-mind abuse memory that keeps us from healing.

Not only our physical minds and bodies register the abuse. Our emotional bodies and their often inchoate word-encoded vocabularies of discourse (with ourselves and with others) keep the abuse alive in our imaginations *and* in our human body's psycho-neuro-immunological systems.^{iv} Inasmuch as the body's biological response systems respond to our thoughts and internalized images as well as to our external experiences in the world, we remain in an aroused state of body-mind consciousness.^v Almost inevitably the social matrix of others in which we live will respond to us in different ways than before the abuse events took place. The nature of those responses also shapes our abilities or inabilities to recover and to heal our wounds.

This is the implicit meaning of trauma: the nature of our victimization at the hands of others not only colonizes our physical and emotional body; it also colonizes our multiple levels of consciousness and our inner spirit. Finally, it changes the nature of our ability to relate to other human beings and to the natural world. Because this is so, abuse and its aftermaths color all of our relationships with ourselves, others and the world.

The Linguistic Interchangeability of *Religious and Spiritual Experience*

Religious institutions, their liturgical practices, worshipping communities, and theological teachings tend to use these words (religious and spiritual) interchangeably. Inevitably then, they conflate them. Thus, in the minds of many lay individuals that which is religious is simultaneously spiritual. In the sacramental life of the worshipping community, religious aspects and spiritual aspects are often seen as interchangeable realities. In the sacramental churches, for example, there is the external ritual of the Eucharistic banquet. Simultaneously, however, there is the human sensory experience of drinking the material wine and eating the material wafer. The external and heavily theologized external sacramental ritual cannot be, therefore, divided or separated from human participation and internalized sensory experience.

Our bio-physical sensory experience is transformed, therefore, by our encounters with the institutional church's theology and practice. We are taught how we *should* experience and *how we should* translate and interpret our experiences of the Eucharistic banquet and this sense of should-ness inevitably colors our sensory experience as well as our interpretive experience. Felt-sense merges with interpretation and becomes habit.

Thus, inside our human experience of and understanding of the Eucharist banquet, there is the orthodox theological interpretation of the meaning of this sacramental meal. This meaning has been overtly taught to members of the laity in the catechetical and doctrinal teachings of the church. Thus, the inner sensory experience of a communal sacred meal is interpreted by mental maps and languages of discourse that the institutional church, itself, has created and implanted.

That which is a religious act of the institutional church in this manner becomes a spiritual act in the life of the believing participant. Teaching (theology), act (ritual participation), internalized belief, and systems of felt-sense meaning are all therefore interconnected and inter-reinforced. They become an institutionalized master narrative inside the religious *and* the spiritual life of individuals. It is this master narrative by which individuals (indeed entire communities) experience and then subsequently judge their collective religious life in the commons and their individual spiritual life in the interior world.

In the inner life of the worshipping believer, therefore, these two words (religious and spiritual) over time become like two genetically different trees which have over time grown into each other. The lived encounter of individuals in the outer world of the religious commons interfaces with the inner world of individual experience and interpretation. They appear, therefore, to the casual observer as one tree. Individual abuse survivors, therefore, may experience the now-joined religious tree and the spiritual tree as one tree – indivisible and inseparable.

To do any kind of preliminary diagnostic work, it is necessary, therefore, to agree on the research definitions of the words *religion, religious, and religiosity*. It is also necessary to provide researchable definitions of the words *spirit and spirituality* (or the much more difficult word *soul*).^{vi}

It is somewhat easier to identify and define *sexual perpetrators or sexual predators, clericalism, religious institutions and victim/survivor hostile faith communities*. Beginning attempts inside the Roman Catholic tradition have been made to identify the behavioral markers of institutional or hierarchical *clericalism*.^{vii} Roman Catholic authors also have provided beginning definitions and analyses of *religious duress*.^{viii} I do not know of any Protestant, Sectarian or Free Church scholar-authors or victim advocates who have examined these two concepts in theological or sociological depth.

To do this kind of careful clinical diagnostic work, multiple professional languages are needed. Most secular therapists, for example, do not have theological preparation and, therefore, are not cognizant of or familiar with the terrain and terminology of the religious and the spiritual in human experience. In a similar situation, most theologians, pastors, and spiritual directors are unaware of the needs for codifiable and clinically accurate diagnoses – according to the American Psychiatric Association *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* – in order for most insurance companies to reimburse treatment costs.

The Potentials for Institutional Self-Correction

When we say *the institutional church is obliged by its theology to provide spiritual care and healing ministries to the survivors of clergy and religious leader sexual abuse; to the survivors of institutional abuse; and to the survivors of community abuse*, do we know and comprehend the nuances of what we are suggesting? Do we have an informed awareness about the kinds of personal and spiritual credentials of institutional religious organization(s) and their institutional personnel that are needed in order to do this kind of soul and spirit repair work?

In thinking about these complex matters, I am always guided by the aphorism I have heard attributed to Einstein: *No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.*

The sociological-historical Christian Church has both created and tolerated situations and structures of sexual abuse. In a certain sense, because of its faulty theologies and equally faulty management practices vis-à-vis abusive clergy and abusive institutional managers, the sociological-historical, therefore, institutional, Christian Church has (1) created a socio-historical and theological climate that tolerates the emergence and perpetuation of abuse and (2) secondarily condones, pardons or actively authorizes abusive clergy and institutional abuse as part of the Christian Church's ongoing but underground and secretive theological-sociological-cultural life history.^{ix}

Unable (or unwilling) to self-correct its ideology and praxis, sexual abuse of the laity became embedded inside the core values and ordinary, on-going praxis of the Church's institutional religious life vis-à-vis its ruling caste.

These kinds of abuse have persisted over long stretches of historical time.^x It seems highly unlikely to me, therefore, that institutionalized Christianity will be able to solve the theological, spiritual and religious problems which have resulted from clergy sexual abusers and from corrupt or incompetent management theologies, ideologies and practices. Given that inability, the institutional church has very little to offer survivors of the church's multiple forms of violence and abusiveness.

During the past fifteen or twenty months, I have come to a personal opinion: if the institutional church had any capability at all for healing this seemingly intractable problem of religious leader sexual abuse of children, teens, and vulnerable adults, it would already have done so. Therefore, in my view of these complex matters, it is highly unlikely that the institutionalized church can be or will be part of the solution; instead, I believe it will continue to be part of the problem. Having created and then tolerated the problem, therefore, the church (following the wisdom of Einstein's perceptive aphorism) cannot solve the clergy sexual abuse problem which its theology and its institutional praxis have created.

Had the institutional church and its managerial caste been able to self-diagnose, self-correct and fix these troublesome issues of religious leader abusiveness, institutional defensive abusiveness and community betrayal of victimized survivors it would already have done so.

It is a therapeutic truism: bad, i.e., inept, therapy compounds a client's problems rather than assisting him or her to resolve and to heal them. In an analogous manner, bad theology and abusive dogma compound the diagnosis and treatment of religious and spiritual problems. Bad theology, therefore, provides the organizing and ideological rationale for the continuation abuse. This rationale almost always invokes God's name. It provides an intellectual or cognitive or interpersonal structure that both underlies and surrounds these issues and, therefore, compounds the clergy sexual abuse survivor's religious *and* spiritual problems.

Only after we do this careful kind of definition work, can we begin to separate the individual trees from the forest – i.e., differentiate forms of religious betrayal from forms of spiritual betrayal; differentiate predator betrayal from institutional betrayal. Only when we do this kind of close-work differentiation and analysis can we begin to delineate and heuristically separate the religious consequences of sexual, managerial and community forms of abuse inside a religious institution or community from their spiritual consequences.

This heuristic move of separating religious consequences of institution-authorized personal and collective abuse from spiritual ones should enable us to begin to identify or create a working typology of short and long-term symptoms. Careful work to establish a functional conceptual framework is essential to the subsequent creation of research models and protocols.

Research protocols become essential to the long-term goal of creating diagnostic criteria and treatment models. In my opinion we need solid demographic research, replicable cross-sectional comparative research, ethnographic research, and longitudinal case study research.

In addition, we need an active and supportive community of professional and lay individuals who collaborate in doing the field work needed to create a working set of diagnoses for religious and spiritual problems in the ongoing lives of the Christian Church's sexual abuse survivors. This is particularly true in clergy and religious institutional abuse situations because sexual violence trauma sequellae are clinically defined in time sequences: short-term consequence and long-term consequences.^{xi}

Only when multiple and replicable research models and protocols are actually utilized in real time will we find - or more likely create - the open doorway to the more long term goal of having religious and spiritual trauma care become reimbursable by contemporary health insurance policies.

Identifying three distinct forms of institution-authorized and institution-perpetrated betrayal allows us heuristically to identify two time-related vectors inside each distinct and psycho-sociological form of betrayal: (a) the betrayal by an individual sexual predator such as a priest, minister, denominational executive, or seminary faculty member; (b) the betrayal by institutions and their personnel done by an institution's managers such as supervising bishops, vicars for the clergy, human resources personnel, denominational heads, or other institutional leaders in management positions; and (c) the negative, reactive, condemning, or pejorative positions taken up by lay members of the surrounding religious community.

Searching for Abuse-promoting and Abuse-sustaining Ideologies

As we begin, I think it is very likely that the theologies which promulgate, allow, and promote sexual abuse of the laity and junior clergy inside the boundaries of the denominational churches will need to be exhumed and examined for their structural DNA. I do not personally believe the Christian Church and its denominational managers — will ever have either a personal or a collective will and institutional capability to do this much-needed diagnostic sleuthing work. The same reality presents itself in the doing of the needed theoretical and political activism work.

This work will need to be done, therefore, inside the secular research academies, think tanks, and professional groups with few or no ties to the institutional church.

The moral rot of the institutional church vis-à-vis clergy and religious leader sexual abuse of the laity has pervaded its theological foundations and institutionalized management structures for too long. This moral rot can be compared to the physiological crisis of typhoid fever in the human body. Typhoid fever threatens the physical life of an individual and can spread rapidly to infect entire communities; moral rot threatens the religious and spiritual life of individuals and entire communities.

In very obscene ways, sexual abuse has become a managing necessity for maintaining the power, authority, and governing ideology of the church's governing elites.

In much the same way that the world's armed militaries strategically utilize the rape of enemy women as a disempowering act; the Christian Church has consistently needed and utilized the strategic sexual and institutional abuse of the laity and junior members of the clergy to empower its institutional elites and to disempower its laity. Authority, control, and power disorders are symptoms of a mortally sick church. In our current century we see the presence of these pernicious disorders in the church's institutional abusive personnel management of sexual abuse done by its clergy.

Disempowering institutional violation done by religious elites is, therefore, the essential organizing act of patriarchal religious and spiritual domination. This type of disempowering violation is usually sexual in nature. By dominating and controlling the sexuality of the lay other, the clergy person takes control of that individual's personal life as it is lived inside the religious commons.

Clergy rape of the laity is, therefore, one of the flying buttresses of the organizing power of the patriarchal institutional church. Clergy rape and institutional, i. e. managerial, defensiveness about its pervasive presence inside the institutional church undergird and maintain the patriarchal power dynamics and control measures of the institutional elites. Rape and the cover-up of rape are, therefore, deliberately-created structural forms of disempowering subjugation.

It is noteworthy that governments and institutional churches both claim God's authorization for their acts of subjugation and control; for their demands for total obedience. I tend to think about this as claiming divine permission to rape in the name of the God or in the name of the nation-state. I am not certain but I think it was Roman Catholic theologian Margaret Miles who observed that when an organization can control someone's sexuality, it has total control over that individual. Sexual violation is one means for demonstrating the clergy's control over an individual's sexuality and, thus, over that individual's ongoing life. Institutional violation both maintains and extends that control.

The life and spirit damages to the church's victims are life-long. The damages to the church's spiritual calling are ongoing and can persist for generations.

If I am correct in this kind of reasoning, it will be people on the socio-historical church's margins (rather than inside its managerial caste or institutional center) who will need to do this complex work of confronting and changing the sexually-repressive and sexually-controlling trajectory of the institutional church, its theology of clergy abuse management, and its deliberate support of complacent or complicitous or even contemptuous victim-blaming lay individuals. It will be people on the institutional church's margins who will be able to understand, correctly analyze, properly acknowledge, and begin to correct the church's faulty pro-rape theology and praxis.

In short, it will be the religious community's disaffiliated and institutionally disdained prophets, healers, whistle-blowers, mystics, and theological reformers who must do this work. To expect the institutional church to self-correct its faulty theology, its equally faulty sociology or anthropology and its corrupted praxis of human sexuality is to engage in magical, wishful thinking.

As I think on these matters, it will not be the church's institutional orthodoxy patrols or its well-established theologians and institutional managers (i.e., insiders) who can do this work. Theological orthodoxy unanchored to compassionate orthopraxis will always side with the powerful. As institutional insiders, most of the church's employees will always protect the institutional church's secrets. Those insiders who violate this unspoken rule will reap the same kinds of repercussive violence as the church's clergy rape survivors – especially those rape survivors who speak up and demand institutional accountability.

When money, power, and a personal share of institutional authority become more important than compassion for the powerless and a principled determination to stand in solidarity with and to help to free the subjugated, abuses will flourish. When morally unanchored religious scrupulosity and arrogant orthodoxy reign as all-important, compassionate orthopraxis will be forgotten or deemed irrelevant and unessential. Pious word will replace

compassionate deed as the marker of institutional religiosity and institutional spirituality.

Jesus was quite clear in Mathew 23:27 that it was not the scrupulous observance of cultic institutional law which characterized genuine religious and spiritual principles and human freedom. He compared the Scribes (recorders and guardians of the law) and the Pharisees (interpreters and extenders of the law) to the ritually unclean and whitewashed tombs of the dead.^{xii}

A Working Model for Proceeding

Definitions Used in This Working Paper^{xiii}

Church: the people of God through all ages and in all cultures; secondarily the institutional church or denomination

Religion or Religious Institution: An institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices as identified sociologically

Religious: Relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality, sacred person, or set of beliefs and practices

Soul: The immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life

Spirit: An animating or vital principle that gives life to physical organisms

Spiritual: Of or relating to, consisting of, or altering the spirit; of or related to sacred matters, i.e., spiritual beings

Theoretical Framework: Thick Description

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he has himself spun.

Clifford Geertz^{xiv}

American anthropologist Clifford Geertz^{xv} utilized the terminology of thick description which has been picked up by ethnographic and auto-ethnographic researchers. **Thick description** involves not only the collection of facts but it also involves commentary, and interpretation. The task of the ethnographic researcher is to extract and interpret meaning structures. Since meaning structures are often layered upon each other, such structures must be examined by the means of intersecting explanations.

For Geertz human culture consists of constructed semiotic webs of signification. The task of the student of culture (or, indeed, of any cultural institution) is, therefore, *interpretation in search of meaning*.^{xvi} I personally hypothesize that this is also the task of good therapeutic work – to assist clients not only to name and describe the events of a lifetime but also to extract the meaning of those events to the personality.

As physician-oncologist Rachel Naomi Remen has often observed in her public appearances and writings, individuals will continue to revisit important life events throughout their lifetime – reinterpreting them through the wisdom of each successive developmental life stage. Each re-visitation and re-interpretation, therefore, holds the potential for healing the body's and spirit's wounds. Each has the potential for participating in the sacred transformation of an individual's life from being society's victim to becoming whole. Good healing work, therefore, consists of assisting victims to transform and to transcend the life experience of victimization. In part, this is a process or re-visioning a life from the perspective of survival and additional life experience.

The Heuristic Model

The rape of the innocent is the silent substructure of institutions that set a rigid dividing line between good and evil and then enforce the good.

Diane Prosser MacDonald^{xvii}

In this model there are three categories of abuse for examination: (a) clergy or religious leader sexual abuse of individuals who are members of a particular religious denomination; (b) that denomination's Institutional leader's malfeasant (perhaps criminal) and, therefore, complicit abuse of previously victimized individuals; and (c) bystander denial of and complicity with clergy sexual abusers *and* malfeasant institutional abusers.

- **Clergy Sexual Abuse of Individuals** which includes acts of grooming and a single act or multiple acts of sexual exploitation and violation. These abusive attacks may invoke the name of God as a causative or supportive agency. They may depend on a social field of religious duress created by faulty, abusive, and anachronistic theologies as well as by rigidly defined and enforced ecclesial practices. These acts can also be supplemented by or exemplified by routinized liturgical or ritual performance practices that directly or indirectly support abuse.^{xviii}
 - Religious consequences in the aftermath of sexual abuse
 - Short-term consequence
 - Long- term consequences
 - Spiritual consequences in the aftermath of sexual abuse
 - Short-term consequences
 - Long-term consequence

- **Institutional Abuse of Individuals** (verbal and/or economic reprisals by institutional managers done in the name of the religious institution (such as a church, synagogue, or other religious organization). These reprisals may also be – and often are - justified in human or divine terms as essential for *the good of the church*. These justifications often include lying and malicious personal attack behaviors. These kinds of behaviors are usually accompanied by secretive and obsessive-compulsive or automatic cover-up behaviors by church officials and their subordinates.

This category can also include attacks on whistle-blowers and other victim-supporters. In this category, whistle-blowers and victim-advocates function as prophets, true priests, and true healers by their support of victims – often at considerable cost to their own personal safety and emotional-spiritual well-being.

- Religious consequences in the aftermath of institutional abuse
 - Short-term consequence
 - Long- term consequences
- Spiritual consequences in the aftermath of institutional abuse
 - Short-term consequences
 - Long-term consequence
- **Bystander Abuse of Individuals** in which an entire community (or a relatively large percentage of its members) supports the victimizer or predator and disbelieves/attacks the victim/survivor. These bystander actions can include support of the perpetrator, denial of the victim-survivor's testimony, community shunning of the survivor, verbal and economic attacks on the public welfare of the victim-survivor and her or his family and supporters.^{xix} Bystander abusiveness can also be directed towards victim advocates, whistle-blowers, and other supportive individuals who live inside the community or on the boundary between insider and outsider.

- Religious consequences in the aftermath of bystander or community abuse
 - Short-term consequence
 - Long- term consequences
- Spiritual consequences in the aftermath of bystander or community abuse
 - Short-term consequences
 - Long-term consequence

Such a heuristic model allows us to begin to differentiate religious sequellae or consequences from spiritual ones in these three unique dimensions of a victim's experiences – experiences that directly or indirectly are a result of clergy or religious leader acts of sexual abuse. It also allows us to look at the consequences of the physical grooming and assault separately from (a) post-assault encounters with abusive structures of institutional governance and (b) post-assault encounters with abusive communal responses.

This model also enables us to begin to do differential diagnostic work between the dimensions of physical, psychological and emotional responses to abuse and those dimensions represented by the religious and spiritual responses of any given survivor's experiences.

Such a model should, therefore, enable us to begin to do credible cross-sectional case study research, diagnostic work, and therapeutic work at the level of the religious and at the level of the spiritual.

Caveat

As we begin to do this work, it must be noted that human experience is holistic, complex, and comprehensive. Individuals respond as embodied organisms to the whole of their experience. It is quite unlikely that most sexual abuse survivors or those who love them will be able to separate their most personal inner experiences and divide them into a conceptual model. In addition, at this moment in historical time, most abuse survivor advocates, clinicians and whistleblowers have not done this kind of close-in

examination of the victim experience for its religious and spiritual components and consequences.

Religious, Spiritual and Sexual History Taking

This means, therefore, that if the religious community and its pastoral theologians, spiritual directors, and pastoral counselors wish to help survivors of the church's multiple violations, they must learn how to take careful and compassionate sexual abuse histories as part of the healing work they seek to do. Part of this history-taking process includes learning how to take religious and spiritual histories. It also means, I believe, that individuals –seeking to assist survivors of the church's abuse, will need to separate themselves from complicitous participation in the church's mismanagement of sexual abuse and sexual abusers.

I personally believe we will encounter great resistance to the concept of taking competent, safe, and compassionate religious, spiritual, and sexual histories inside religious institutions. I personally believe that the learning curve for insider-members of the various religious guilds is going to be a very steep one. Whether this is because sexual violence is scary (Doyle) or the reality that many managers of religious institutions are almost continuously engaged in complicitous and victim-contemptuous behavior (Krall) that reality, however, should not deter us from our conceptual, diagnostic and healing work.

We should not overlook the change which occurred in the middle of the twentieth-century. When intimate physical procedures involving sexual organs need to be carried out inside medical offices and hospitals, two individuals are usually present – including an individual of the same gender as the patient. In addition, medical care personnel enter and re-enter such spaces to do two things: (a) protect the patient from abuse and (b) protect the practitioner from legal proceedings and accusations of abuse. This is an important boundary line between the practitioner and the client. It protects, therefore, both parties in the care-giving and care-receiving transaction.

An analogous situation arises in pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or any other form of clergy interaction with lay individuals. It is most unwise for such counseling to go on in physically isolated and emotionally intimate contact situations of helper and those helped. One way to protect the lay members of religious communities is to develop ethical guidelines for practice that are simultaneously wise and practical. It must be noticed that enforcement of these guidelines is as essential as their formulation in the first place.

Empathic Emotional Resonance Management

Our human experience of **human empathy** is simultaneously part of the problem individuals face as trauma survivors and part of the solution. In a similar way it is part of the problem and part of the solution for survivor advocates and whistle-blowers

Empathy is a form of intuitive or interpersonal human knowing that involves **emotional resonance** between and among human beings.

Common intense human emotions inside one human being often evoke the same kind of shared experience inside other human beings. Shared experiences of joy, love, sexual attraction, etc. all involve a kind of empathic transmission or emotional resonance. So too do shared human experiences of fear, anger, anxiety, rage, terror, or disgust.

It is widely recognized that **emotional contagion** exists. Emotional contagion is defined this way: the phenomenon of having one person's emotions and related behaviors trigger similar emotions and behaviors in other people.

Psychologist Sigal Barsade notes: *People routinely catch each other's emotions when working together in groups.* She notes that this not only influences moods; it can affect people's judgment capabilities and decision-making processes. And, it operates below the level of ordinary conscious awareness.^{xx}

Intense emotions such as anxiety (or terror) and anger (or rage), almost always cross the empathic barriers between and among people. If, however, in a crisis situation, even one person remains calm, it is likely that others will remain calm as well.

Rage, anxiety, terror, sudden grief, anguish, extreme disgust, and other equally intense emotional states all have the ability to pass through the empathic barriers between and among people.

A calm and loving pet – such as dog – can help calm emotionally-aroused and traumatized human beings. Therapy dogs do this all the time. Other calm, compassionate and loving human beings can do the same.

Over time, as our bodies and minds mature, we learn to protect ourselves from overwhelming emotion. Part of our evolution as human beings is the development of empathic barriers. We can choose to open or to close off our human capacity for empathy. These barriers can be positive in that they allow us to function. If, for example, first responders fell apart with every emergency call, they would be ineffective.

Human experiences of sexual and physical abuse and its concomitant experiences of strong bio-physical and socio-emotional responses interfere with individual's ordinary abilities to self-regulate their bio-physical and emotional responses to life and its stressors. That which helps an individual to survive during an act of abuse (for example, the spontaneous ability to dissociate) may become a barrier to living a healthy and self-sustaining life after abuse.

Empathic resonance barriers can also have a negative effect – when they cause us to close our sense of compassion towards others who suffer; when they shut down our ability to form loving relationships with others; when they close so tightly we no longer know who we are. When the empathic barrier is totally closed, we are shut off from other human beings. I sometimes think about this as pulling up the bridge over a crocodile-infested moat. No one in their right mind will approach me when I am so well-defended. Inside this personal or internal castle, I am mobilizing the inner troops for a self-protective and self-defending counter-attack to a perceived external threat and I intend that counter-attack to be both deadly and successful.

I personally don't want to live in an isolated castle surrounded by an alligator-filled moat; I don't want to live my life hidden behind a closed and locked down gate. Probably, most of us don't. In addition, as a person concerned with my own spirituality and as a person committed to the peace and healing of the world, I am appalled at these alligator-moments in my life. When they happen, I pay attention.

Jung talks about these alligator-filled moments as representative of a personal shadow. Each of us, he says, has a personal shadow. Each of us must come to terms with our personal shadow as a way of learning how to be a healing, compassionate, and loving presence in the world. In the absence of a realistic and present threat to my life, a closed empathic barrier prohibits me from knowing love and from experiencing compassion for my own wounds and for the wounds of others.

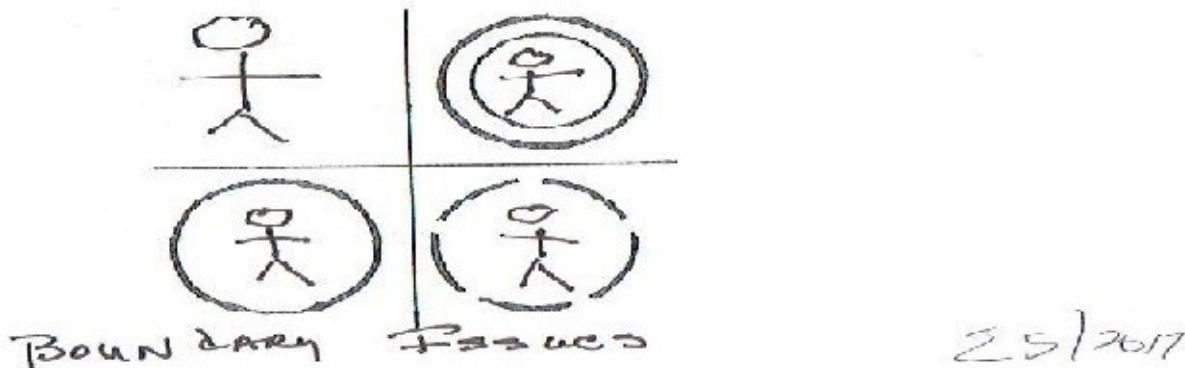
Trauma researchers such as Judith Herman^{xxi}, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School, have come to understand that one of the issues for trauma survivors in situations of deliberate human violence is that of empathic transference – the emotional state of one individual – the perpetrator - transplants itself into the emotional state of a second – his or her victim. A rapist's rage, for example, takes up residence inside the psyche of his victims. A victim's terror takes up residence inside the psyche of his or her therapist. This phenomenon is clinically known as transference, counter-transference or traumatic transference.

I personally believe the human capacity for emotional resonance and empathy is the basis of therapeutic intuition – that ability to understand the other's emotional state without being told. I also believe it is the foundation for compassion. But it is a double-edged sword.

Over the years I have come to image and then to experience the empathic barrier as a flexible one – capable of being opened and closed at will. If, I find myself being overwhelmed by emotion, I can ask myself if I am feeling my own emotions or if I am absorbing the emotions of others around me. As a professional nurse, I needed to learn, therefore, an ability to manage my reactive emotional self so I could remain helpful to the people who had asked for my help.

I have, therefore, needed to learn how to close and then re-open a damper on my empathic response in order to do what is needed.

Situation Appropriate Personal Boundary Maintenance^{xxii}



Another set of terms closely related to this interpersonal phenomenon of emotional resonance is the creation and maintenance of flexible, situation-appropriate personal and interpersonal boundaries. Learning to maintain appropriate interpersonal boundaries is a clinical mandate. The professional person (physician, therapist, nurse, attorney, teacher, etc.) is always (or should be) - in an ethically and legally mandated professional relationship - in control of the interpersonal boundary between professional and client.

I would sometimes say to upper level students that even if an individual of either gender got down on their knees and begged the professional person for sexual contact, it was the professional's ethical obligation to (1) refuse the seduction effort; (2) to assist the client or other person to understand the inappropriate nature of his or her request; and (3) to assist the client to understand and internalize the concept of situation-appropriate sexual behavior and boundaries.

The safety, indeed the very efficacy of the therapeutic container, must be maintained at all times for healing to be even remotely possible. It is the therapist's (or minister's, teacher's, nurse's, doctor's, lawyer's) obligation to manage the interpersonal container of the work to be done in order that that learning and healing can occur.

Boundary maintenance and empathy regulation are both important aspects of the professional's ethical obligation to clients and to society at large. Both are essential skills in human life.

Group Contagion

There is another application that I want to mention. When we are traumatized in some manner or another, we become highly sensitized to trauma. There is a group contagion effect. This can be in person or it can be by means of electronic media. We now know, for example, that a continuous watching the trade towers fall in New York – a television event in this nation – had a traumatic effect on many individuals all across the United States and not just the people on site in New York City. In the aftermath of these events, clinical psychologists began to talk about a collective national traumatization issue. One long-term consequence has been, I believe, the development of a collective national paranoia about individuals who practice the spirituality of Islam.

We now know that immediate intervention in trauma is more helpful to long-term healing than was recognized even twenty years ago. We also know that when individuals first tell the story of their traumatic violation that it is important for their long-term healing prospects that they be both believed and supported. Unaddressed traumatic memory which embeds itself over time tends to be much more troubling to individuals. It matters a great deal to the healing process for survivors of traumatic events if (1) they were disbelieved; (2) judged or blamed; (3) shamed or made to feel guilty. Inside their personal encounters with others. In situations of blaming, shaming and judging, survivors' journeys to healing are made much more difficult. These kinds of negative responses from others tend to block or to impede the healing processes after traumatic events.

Victims of sexual violence – by the nature of their experience, often do not have this immediate support and help. Even if they immediately go to an Emergency Room or call the police, the emphasis on doing forensic exams may extend or magnify the individual's trauma. These problems are magnified a hundred-fold by racism, heterosexism, sexism, ethnicity, and other forms of prejudice such as class prejudice or pre-existing stereotypes. A raped and battered prostitute (no matter what gender or age), for example, has few personal resources and little recourse for getting help and for being believed. A despised ethnic outsider – the alien or foreigner (un extranjero) in the land, for example, has almost no way to find help inside the governing and healing systems of the dominant majority.

The Concept of Emotional Holograms

To continue: those of us who have had compassionate contact with survivors of sexual abuse, those who love them, and/or with antagonistic church administrators can begin by examining our own internalized hologram of what I will call the institutional church's solidarity abuse of its true priests, healers, survivor advocates, whistle-blowing prophets, and genuine mystics. By solidarity abuse I mean that the institutional church dishes out its institutional rage against abuse survivors *and* against their survivor advocates and helpers in such a manner that does not discriminate between rape survivors and rape survivor advocates as objects of its indiscriminate disdain, institutionalized rage, and managerial proclivities towards institutional abuse.

We, as advocates, can begin therefore with our own personal stories of religious, spiritual and communal trauma – usually initiated by our personal encounters with our own denominations and their religious hierarchy. We can, in short, begin with what we already intuitively and experientially know about these various kinds of traumatic phenomena. This personal knowledge bank can become the foundation for our exploration of these issues with others – the direct survivors of the church's violation and systemic oppression.

I see this process of “in-depth mining” of what we know as a way of coming to understand who we have become as a result of what we have experienced and now know. In a phrase I learned from therapist and former Benedictine monk Richard Sipe, this involves *radical honesty* about our life commitments, life experiences, life trajectories, personal life histories, personal behaviors, and our personal identities.^{xxiii}

Trauma specialist Judith Herman^{xxiv} describes secondary trauma or counter-transference trauma. In a therapist’s personal encounter with the client’s narrated memory of the violence of sexual assault and in their narrated accounts of institutional abusiveness towards survivors, the traumatic effect crosses the empathic barrier of individuals and, I believe, entire communities. In essence, therefore, the original acts of violence and their traumatic effects enter into the psyches of entire communities of people.

The possibility of secondary trauma is a bystander reality, therefore, for everyone who works with or lives in intimate proximity with survivors of sexual assault. Encounters with others, and their experiences of trauma, have religious and spiritual consequences for family members, therapists, survivor advocates, whistle-blowers, body-work healers, institutional prophets and concerned citizens.

The experience of cognitive dissonance in the face of a corrupted institutional church is significant. The consequences of this reality must also be added into the mix of religious and spiritual consequences in the wake of clergy or religious leader sexual abuse of weaker and more vulnerable individuals inside the boundaries of any given religious denomination or institution.

Institution and Individual

Metaphorically, institution and individual form a religious or spiritual Mobius-strip. Both (institution and individual) are essential to the religious *and* spiritual development of individuals, communities and cultures.

In this essay a heuristic line has been drawn in order to better define institutionally-shaped and culturally-shared religious experience and institutionally-shaped and culturally-shared spiritual experience. Religious experience and spiritual experience both involve human encounters with that ineffable, immanent-transcendent presence that European-origin Christians call Spirit and first nation aboriginal Amerindians call the Great Spirit). We create or draw an artificial line between religious experience and spiritual experience in order to establish diagnostic categories. In real life human life experiences, the distinction is likely to be much less defined and clear.

When a priest or minister (or other religious leader such as a rabbi, a bhikkhu or bikkhuni, an imam or a guru) sexually abuses an individual over whom she or he has religious authority, the abusive religious leader not only attacks the physical body; s/he attacks both the religious aspects *and* the spiritual aspects of the victimized individual's personality. It follows, therefore, that the victimized individual is traumatized in the religious aspects *and* in the spiritual aspects of his or her ongoing life.

When institutional religious leaders such as bishops, church executives, seminary rectors, lead pastors, chairpersons of the board of elders, or other supervisory individuals inside religious institutions provide cover for the perpetrator of sexual abuse, they perpetrate a second layer of abuse. This second layer may be more damaging to the religious life and spiritual life of individuals and entire communities than the acts of physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by a sexually abusive religious leader.

Taken together (perpetrator abuse plus the abuse of institutional manager cover-ups), the impact on the victims of abuse is often overwhelming to the personality. In addition to physical, emotional and psychological consequences, there are religious sequellae and spiritual sequellae in the abused individual's life experiences and in the living experiences of the entire community.

Death of a Community

There are two kinds of institutional death. The first is a literal death of a community – the closure of a parish, for example.

The second occurs when a community ceases to be as a resource for a particular individual – in this case a church-victimized person. For that particular individual, the institution dies. In such situations, the individual exits the institution and locks the door behind them. Never again can or will they trust that particular community of people or that particular institution. In this way the community loses its hold on the individual. But it also loses that individual's gifts and resources. Not only is the individual's religious and spiritual experience weakened by their departure from their prior community. The community is weakened by their departure and loses the human gifts and unique personal resources that individual represents.^{xxv}

The symbolic death of a religious community is particularly visible in situations where a significant number of individuals have personally experienced traumatic encounters inside the margins of the religious institution or community. Encounters, for example, with physically and sexually violent religious leaders can cause the death of an individual's faith, i.e., belief system. Encounters with corrupt and malfeasant institutions may even more powerfully cause death of an individual's faith assumptions.

For individuals who once belonged to a religious community the loss of the community is significant. For one thing, the loss interferes with the human need to belong to a people. Several individuals have mentioned to me that one side effect of clergy or religious leader sexual abuse is the loss of a sense of safety inside a particular community. This may express itself in a growing sense of internal distress, experiences of panic and terror, or dissociated consciousness as one physically approaches a church building, encounters a priest in religious garb or attempts to enter a church sanctuary as a spiritual refuge. It may also, much more subtly, express itself as an inner resistance to even thinking about church attendance and participation.

In each of these situations, there is an interruption of the victimized individual's need to belong to a particular people or to a particular community. There will always be, I think, a subset of victimized individuals who will emotionally conclude that no human being is safe and that no human community can be trusted. These individuals are at a high risk for secondary disorders or dual diagnoses such as addictions, high risk behaviors, and even suicide. Another subset will, themselves, become abusers of others – the “gift” that continues giving – thus damaging additional lives.

The Spiritual Death of a Religious Community or Institution

Interpersonally violent religious leaders betray their position of leadership and trust. Encounters with malevolent institutional responses (by victimized individuals and their supporters) function as profound betrayals. These complex and interpenetrated betrayals almost inevitably cast doubts upon the validity or reliability of the spiritual principles and teachings that form the foundational core of any religious community.

In the wake of betrayal, doubt and cognitive dissonance eat away at the heart of religious and spiritual commitments for individuals and sometimes for entire communities. In his 2008 presentation to SNAP, canon lawyer and Dominican philosopher-theologian Thomas Doyle described his own crisis of faith after he began to ask himself, and I paraphrase: *if my denominational church's leaders can lie about raping little children, what else do they lie about?*^{xxvi}

Asking one's own self such a question is the critical moment for beginning to face our internalized experiences of cognitive dissonance. For some formerly devout and religious individuals, therefore, this is the beginning of their descent into that psychic-spiritual reality which ancient Christian mystics called *the dark night of the human soul*.

Betrayal of a personal nature and/or betrayals of an institutional nature almost automatically and irrevocably erode a formerly believing individual's most basic premises about his or her institutional religious life. They erode the individual's ability to trust. They erode, therefore, the individual's pre-existing spirituality.

It is not only specific belief systems – doctrines and dogmas and teachings that erode. Trust in the community as a growth-producing, nurturing and supportive family of faith also erodes. It is equally as likely that belief in a community's specific naming of God also erodes.

One consequence of these kinds of erosion is the very painful human experience of no longer feeling as if one belongs to this community. The inner sensation may be one of feeling the inner self as estranged or alienated from everything and everyone that one has previously trusted and believed. In this situation of betrayal and subsequent alienation, individuals (and sometimes entire communities) go into temporary or permanent exile from their previous religious community and spiritual home.^{xxvii}

Betrayal trauma researchers describe this as a time of great psychic disruption. Previously trusted world views no longer work for the individual. Previously trusted individuals are now no longer trusted. The community is no longer *my people* or *my community*. It is also very likely that individuals will come to the position that *your God is no longer my God*. A subsequent loss of belief in any and all gods is frequent. When trust in religious institutions, religious leaders, and the religious community is destroyed, a wide variety of important and life-sustaining social interactions are disrupted and destroyed.^{xxviii}

The times when survivors are in crisis and need to respond to their history of victimization and betrayal are internally chaotic.^{xxix} When they most need their/a community or their people, they are bereft because they can find no way back into the kind of trust needed to re-establish interpersonal bonds of mutuality, trust and love.

The death of an individual's unquestioning faith, i.e., belief system, and the death of that individual's trust in her or his communities of faith are, I believe, inextricably linked. Both are devastating realities to an individual's inner spirituality and to his or her sense of meaningful relationality with others. Each undermines or totally destroys a sense of an individual's personal attachment to a compassionate and loving and even salvific deity.

Inasmuch as individual and community are often holographic images of each other, not only the individual must make sense of religious leader abusiveness and institutional abusiveness. So too must entire communities make sense of that which has happened.

When an individual chooses to leave his or her cradle community of faith in the spiritual crisis of trauma-induced unbelief, the institution loses a vital living and co-creating component. The institution is weakened from within. When a large percentage of a community's membership leaves or fails to reproduce itself with succeeding generations of believers, eventually that religious institution dies.

When the institution dies, that institution's particular naming and understanding of God also dies. It may be that there are very isolated individuals who worship the Goddess Inanna of ancient Sumer (today's Iraq) but there is no global world religion that offers liturgies and rituals in her name. Thus, one the ancient world's most powerful Goddesses (Inanna) is no longer a living name for the divine. The meme of her worship has failed to reproduce itself in the commons. The living human genetic descendents of her worship cult now call on other gods and offer liturgies of worship inside other communities whose name for God is other than hers.

I conclude, therefore, that when a living community dies, its gods die with it. Similarly, when a god's name dies on the communal tongue, that particular religious community dies.

It has become clear to me that for abused individuals, their loss of religious belief systems (along with institutional practices of religiosity) is usually permanent. Some survivors will find their way into alternative religious communities or spiritual understandings. Some will not. Some survivors will find their way to a personal spirituality that assists them to heal. Others will not.

In my personal observations over the years, abused individuals will need to make sense of the religious and spiritual damages in such a manner that they are freed from self-blame, shame, guilt, fear, anger, terror, rage, and a blazing hostility towards all things religious or spiritual.

As long as the negative emotions control the personality, the individual is not free to move towards healing and wholeness. Herman, in various public lectures over the past forty years, has consistently talked about the need to remove the abuser from one's own psychic field of control. I agree with her. This is equally true of abusive institutions.

In my own personal life where I have encountered abusive individuals or I have encountered institutional events of personal betrayal, it takes time for me to regain a psychological sense of balance and purpose. This is common, I believe, to all human experiences of betrayal trauma. It frequently demands helpers and friends who walk with me as I seek to regain my inner balance and my inner connectedness with Spirit.

Religious and Spiritual Histories

The sacred wound is a big beautiful arrow pointing us in the direction of our purpose.

Attributed to Jean Houston^{xxx}

At my age (having entered the final and concluding decades of my life) I am convinced everybody has a primal wound or wounds. They are not the same wounds. But these primal wounds are - or can be - the door to spiritual devastation. However, they are – or can be – an opening doorway to personal growth, spiritual awakening, personal maturation, and transformation of the inner self. Thus, they can also lead us as individuals and as entire communities to the subsequent development of self-other compassion. For this growth of compassion to happen, each wounded human being needs to recognize the nature of his or her woundedness and seek to work with these wounds rather than replicating, re-enacting, re-embodiment, repressing, or fighting against them. This is the spiritual growth process that Jewish-Hindu guru Ram Dass has described as *learning to bear that which is unbearable*.^{xxxii} In Asian philosophies, this is described as the opening of the heart chakra – a necessary preliminary to spiritual awakening.

A friend and nurse colleague of mine, a survivor of affinity rape in her young adult life, recently wrote to me: *survivors and sheroes had to do so much dissing of discomfort, discredit and distrust of self, disbelieve in self-knowing, dismiss own safety, and then to heal, disentangle from false beliefs....That was a real conundrum: I was supposed to believe what was being done to me was for my own good because an authority figure knew what was best/good for me? And all the while these religious leaders were preaching their religious beliefs to me... [Now I suggest] inner knowing, intuition, inner experience [helped me] to take back that which had been dissed for so long.*^{xxxii}

My personal perception of these complex matters is that it is impossible to separate an individual's spiritual history (and its concomitant internalized religious beliefs) from her or his encounters with religious institutions and their embodied cultural forms (i.e., theologies, spiritual teachings, liturgies, etc) – either in positive or negative aspects. It is impossible, to speak metaphorically, to separate a living termite colony from its living mound. If a physical structure – the mound – is destroyed, the living colony of its resident termites dies. If too many individuals in the colony die, the mound dies. Individual and mound are, therefore, inseparably bound in a profound symbiosis of individual with community and culture. There can be no mound without individuals and there can be no community of individuals without the mound.

The same is true of institutional religion and individual spirituality. There is a profound symbiosis of our collective religious experiences and our internalized and individual spirituality. Each shapes and influences the development of the other. Those of us living in the Christian West, for example, have a different cultural religiosity and personal spirituality than do individuals living in Hindu India, Islamic Pakistan, or the aboriginal Amazon basin.

I think visually about these kinds of relationships as Mobius-strip relationships: there is no inside and no outside. Another way to say this is that we cannot separate our inner experiences of socio-cultural-theological religiosity and religion-inculcated or religion –infused spirituality from our external encounters with religious and spiritual institutions and their teachings.

Only an alien from Mars, for example, has never before heard (1) that America is a Christian country and (2) the belief that God will bless America when culturally-begged to do so by its political and religious leaders. These kinds of cultural-religious phrases take up lodging in our body-mind-spirit when we are very, very young. In my personal experiences of these realities, it is impossible to terminally and permanently eliminate them from the interior body-mind-soul-self. Whether I agree with or disagree with this cultic understanding of my nation's religious and political identity and its theo-political agreements, I am shaped by them in my day-to-day life.

In a religious example: if for thirty-five years I have recited the Apostle's Creed fifty two Sundays a year, the Creed has taken up permanent residence in my mind. Should I come, by one means or another, to a practical atheism and stop attending religious services, the Creed will continue to inform me and to shape my personal experiences – often now in inchoate and unconscious ways.

I grew up inside my mother's non-creedal church. But my father's religious heritage was a creedal church. For the last fifteen years of his life, he did not regularly attend Sunday services. Yet, when he was dying, it was the sacraments and the creeds of his youth and young-to-mid adult life which enabled him to cross over into death in a very peaceful manner. While he left his church in a traumatic manner in his early forties, as he neared death in his early sixties he sought to reconcile himself to the earliest spiritual and theological teachings of that same church. Those ancient beliefs sustained him as he knowingly faced an early and premature death. Consequently, he was able to exit life in a very gentle and reconciled manner.

These Troublesome Questions of Belief and Doubt: Cognitive Dissonance

The relationships of an individual's belief structures (or her/his inner assumptive world) to trauma is important when we think about sexual trauma in the aftermath of sexually abusive clergy and structurally abusive institutions that provide cover for abuse perpetrators. .

Our belief structures and internalized assumptive worldviews are shaped in our earliest human experiences as we began to encounter other human beings. Our deepest and most unconscious belief structures are considered to constitute our assumptive world. Our most basic assumption, for example, may be that the external physical world is predictable and safe. This assumption allows us to walk on planet earth without thinking about whether a sinkhole will swallow us as we leave our front door to go to work.

Rationally, we know that nature is not necessarily predictable or benign: there are devastating tsunami waves, tornadoes, hurricanes, landslides, wild fires, sink holes, etc. Each of these threatens human life as well as the ecosystem we live in.

Unless we have had intimate, up-close and personal contact with such natural events, we usually act as if we are invulnerable to their harm. This absence of preoccupation with danger is essential if we are to actually live our lives inside of nature and culture.

For example: having lived through one medium-strength earthquake in Southern California during my graduate school years, I subsequently paid attention to and consciously noted even very minor earth tremors. Before this embodied personal encounter with moderate strength earth tremors, I knew about California's fault lines and its history of severe earthquakes. Having never experienced one, however, I had never before paid attention to small earth tremors.

Some years later I moved into the Bay area in Northern California. The Bay Bridge was still under re-construction following the Loma Prieta Earthquake. I had neighbors who knocked on my door the day I moved into my sabbatical apartment. They told me I needed to stock up on bottled water and canned foods if I was going to live in Berkeley. It was immediately clear to me several years after that major quake that my new neighbors were still traumatized by having lived through such a major earthquake.

Another common basic assumption is that other human beings are predictable and trustworthy. We tend to trust our own perceptions of others as one foundation for building relationships and communities. Without a basic common-sense trust of our own intuitions, we would be unable to form trusting or lasting relationships with others. Once betrayed by sexual abuse perpetrators, this assumption begins to be revised. No longer are all individuals assumed to be trustworthy. No longer do we assume that we, ourselves, will always be safe. If an individual has been abused by a priest, for example, a fear of that specific priest may generalize to all priests. Even a long-distance sighting of a priest in religious garb on a distant street corner may be a traumatic and panic-inducing event.

Personally experienced violence of any kind, including affinity or stranger sexual abuse and domestic violence is, therefore a deeply disturbing event. These forms of personal violence threaten the biological integrity of individuals and the social integrity of entire communities (such as families, churches, etc.) They threaten the assumptive worlds of individuals and communities.^{xxxiii} When our assumptive worlds are seriously threatened or shattered by life's experiences, we are thrust into the very threatening and uncomfortable situation of cognitive dissonance.^{xxxiv}

Many years ago a woman client said to me: *I was taught as a child that if I wore my covering (prayer cap) God would protect me – especially when I prayed for his help. When the rapist broke into my home, I prayed for God to protect me. But I was raped. I no longer believe in God.*

Cognitive dissonance is one of the most difficult experiences an individual or a community can experience. Inevitably, it's a life-altering experience.

- That which an individual or community has believed as truth is thrown into doubt
- That which an individual or community has seen and experienced as safe has now become unsafe
- That which an individual or community has trusted has now become untrustworthy
- That which an individual or community has relied upon has been demonstrated to be unreliable
- That which an individual or community once counted on as credible has been discredited
- That which an individual or community depended on has been demonstrated to be undependable
- That which provided a sense of security now creates a deep sense of insecurity
- Our most deeply held structures of belief and their subsequent guiding principles for our action in the world have now been proven unreliable or even false

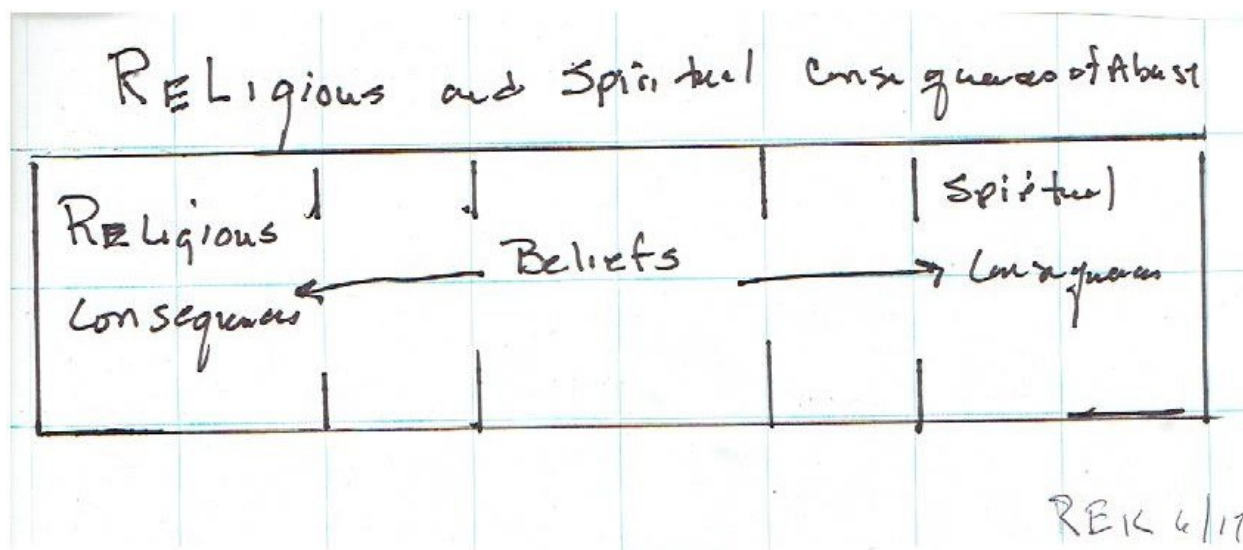
It is my opinion that extended and intense experiences of cognitive dissonance are among the most difficult psychological or emotional experiences of our lives. What we knew – or thought we knew – is unreliable. What we believed – or thought we believed – is no longer credible. We are like boats without rudders, planes without ailerons, bicycles without handlebars.

A Model to Differentiate Religious and Spiritual Consequences^{xxxv}

When we think of this heuristic divide between religiosity and spirituality, we need to make cognitive sense out of the likelihood that in everyday experienced life, we do not – nor can we - make such a rigid dividing line. This is especially true for individuals who have been raised inside religious families and communities.

In the weeks I have been working out my own conceptual framework here, I have continually asked how these two human experiences relate in my own life and in the lives of others I know well.

One recent morning I woke with a beginning model in my mind's eye. I saw a three block drawing. The first (or left hand) square had closed lines on the top, left side, and bottom. The right side was permeable. The second (or middle square) had closed lines on the top and the bottom. The left and right sides were open and thus permeable. The third (or right hand square) was closed on the top, bottom and right side while the left side was permeable.



In my mind's eye that morning, the left square was religiosity and the right square was spirituality. Both were connected to the second and inner square – and thus were related to the whole. Watching this image unfold in my mind's eye, I asked what the middle square's name was. Its name: belief. The word belief implies teachings. Belief does not roam around the inner or outer worlds unattached to content. The very construct of the word belief implies belief in something or in someone. If I walk around shouting, *I believe, I believe*, someone will inevitably ask me, and rightfully so, *what exactly is it that you believe?* There is content within every belief and within every belief system.

The link between human religiosity and human spirituality, therefore, is not some vague theoretical no-man's land. The link is specific. What we think and what we believe impact our religiosity *and* our spirituality. This reality places us in the role of theology/theology makers as well as theology/theology consumers. What we believe provides meaning to our lives. It affects our religiosity and it affects our spirituality.

Our theology – or more likely in a post-modern age, our theologies – is a system of intellectual constructs. It is, in short, our personal theologies that affect the religious aftermaths of personal violation and institutional systemic violence in our lives. The same is true of our spirituality. As I write these words I hypothesize that what we believe to be true conditions our short and long-term responses to traumatic betrayal and abuse. In situations of abuse, not only our bodies and personalities have been violated. Our theologies and belief systems have also been violated.

This visual model of three permeable and interactive squares implies that religiosity and spirituality share a common core and that core is belief supported by teachings (or dogma, theology, scriptures, etc.) or experience. Each square is, therefore, unique in its composition but each square is related to or helps to constitute the whole.

Making Sense Out of Our Life Narratives

Over the course of my lifetime I have learned to look for teachers who can help me. If and when I can begin to make sense out of my confusing life narrative, I can begin to do the emotional, psychological, and spiritual work of healing. As I do this hard work, I begin to find renewed energy and it sometimes seems to me as if an inner room – whose door has been locked shut – now opens. In this opening, there is an inner spaciousness I have not previously encountered. As I begin to live inside that new inner spaciousness, I find that my compassion for my own troubles and wounded self increases. Simultaneously, my compassion for others' troubles and wounds also increases. When I no longer need to keep my empathic barriers closed at all times for fear of being overwhelmed by sadness, grief, inner turmoil, doubt, panic and rage, my deeper self begins to guide me in new and wiser ways.

This is a spiritual path to healing. It is a path in which deeply traumatized individuals begin to learn and to create the pathway to bearing that which is unbearable in their lives.^{xxxvi} An acquaintance of mine was viciously raped by a stranger in her own house. Many years later she told me that first she was a victim; then she was a survivor; and now in her later years she had become an over-comer and a thriver. The rape event of her younger life no longer dominated her life and her relationships with others as it had done earlier. I think this can be one way of linguistically understanding the trauma survivor's life journey to healing – a continuous process of growing in self-other understanding accompanied by a continuous process of learning how to manage the ongoing aftermaths of traumatic violence in one's life and its relationships with others.

Embodiment

In addition, therefore, in my personal perception, it is impossible to separate an individual's soul and his/her spiritual life-force from the living human body. It is impossible inside intact and healthy communities of faith and praxis to separate an individual's faith from cultural teachings about faith.

It is impossible to separate an individual from his or her community of faith without weakening the faith of that individual. When individuals leave their communities of faith, they weaken those communities. Either act (weakening the community or weakening the individual) create times of stress and feelings of dislocation. It is in these times or religious and spiritual dislocation that our assumptive worlds are first threatened or shattered and then abandoned.

As long as a human being is alive, s/he is both a physical and a spiritual being. To be human means we are embodied in human flesh. I personally follow the new age formulation that human beings are spiritual beings incarnated into and living in a physical body.

As spiritual beings individuals may, however, choose to be or to not be religious. In addition, there is an element of the material or corporeal world inside every spiritual impulse. Equally so is the reality that there is an element of the spiritual inside every physical human body and its embodied actions in the world.

As human beings we incarnate, therefore, the sacred and the profane. We incarnate the transcendent and the immanent inside our interior experienced human reality, there is no dualism; only unity. We are, I believe, embodied spiritual beings.

The Fervent Human Desire to Believe

In her December 27, 2015 blog, *Questions from a Ewe*, the anonymous blogger enters into a discussion of “Living a Myth” in light of the 2015 movie *Spotlight*.^{xxxvii} In particular the blogger wants us to consider the fervent human desire to believe a myth – long after it is time for us to give up belief in that particular myth. .

She writes:

The movie chronicles the Boston Globe’s investigative journalism that led to its January 6, 2002 bombshell story about the Catholic Church knowingly leaving pedophile priests in active ministry for decades. Though individual sex abuse stories had been published throughout the previous decades, this story altered the conversation because it demonstrated that a sick, systemic culture involving hierarchy and lay people enabled and helped to perpetuate widespread abuse. It revealed a culture pretending each abuse case was simply an individual, isolated “whoopsie there” incident so as to perpetuate the myth of a perfect church.

Seeking to protect itself from the scandal of priest sexual abusers, the Boston diocese, itself, became scandalous. In its willingness to deceive the community in which it was anchored, it demonstrated a perverse and pervasive disregard for the victims of its clergy. For much of the diocese’s history the surrounding community colluded with the church’s hierarchy in *its fervent human desire to believe in and perpetuate the myth of the perfect church.*^{xxxviii}

It is this myth-creating and myth-perpetuating culture that the anonymous blogger asks us to examine.

I know an aging woman who told me many years ago about her own release of adult rage and anger at parental abusiveness and a super-controlling and highly authoritarian religious belief system. With her husband's support, she wrote out her grievance list of pain, rage, anguish and grief. Then she and her husband designed a ritual of burning in which the paper and her personal feelings of bondage within the parent-child relationship were offered to the spirit of fire. As we talked, she commented, *I have been free of my obsessive rage ever since then.*

In Conclusion

In this paper, I have differentiated that which is religious (or religiosity) from that which is spiritual (or spirituality). Applying this basic heuristic model to the aftermaths of sexual violation done by clergy and to the aftermaths of institutional malfeasance in managing abusive clergy, two separate conceptual models emerged.

The first model examines the religious and spiritual sequellae to three forms of abuse:

- Clergy Sexual Abuse of Individuals (Physical Attack and Sexual Violation)
 - Religious Sequellae
 - Spiritual Sequellae

- Institutional Abuse of Individuals (Clericalism, Institutional Attack)
 - Religious Sequellae
 - Spiritual Sequellae

- Bystander Abuse of Individuals (Denial, Community Attack and Isolation of victim-survivors)
 - Religious Sequellae

- Spiritual Sequellae

With this model in mind, research protocols can now be designed to gather data for each form of abuse.

The second interpretive model is more visual. It represents a linear model of three sequential squares. It is, however, non-linear in the sense that the three squares represent reality in any given moment in time. In addition, this visual model of a three square continuum enables us to ask question about the key to unlocking the interconnectedness of spiritual and religious sequellae in situations of sexual abuse by clergy, institutional malfeasance and religious community hostility towards clergy sexual abuse survivors. In creating this model, I have hypothesized that the independent variable is an individual's theological belief or assumptive world system.

If this model proves to be an appropriate or useful one, then it should allow survivor advocates, therapists, pastoral counselors, and spiritual directors to assist survivors in a detailed examination of their belief system and their assumptive world before and after abuse. This kind of spiritual and religious history taking is a corollary to a medical history taken by health care providers.

Taking an informed and through religious and spiritual history is, I now believe, a necessary precursor to examining the religious and spiritual wounds caused by abuse – these manifested symptoms and religious-spiritual pathologies which so trouble sexual abuse survivors of clergy misconduct and religious institutional mismanagement of abusive personnel.

Another goal of this essay is to encourage systematic research protocols in two models: longitudinal and cross-sectional.

Afterword

The true experts in sexual abuse work are the victims. We need, I believe to harvest their experiences as a platform upon which therapeutic and pastoral care models can be developed and tested.

Glossary of Terms Used

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Church:

- A building or edifice used for worship
- The clergy or the officialdom of a religious body
- A body or organization of religious beliefs
- Denomination such as Methodist Church
- Congregation
- A public divine worship
- The clerical profession
- Added to Dictionary Definitions: (Vatican Two): the people of God

Religion:

- The service or worship of God or the supernatural
- Commitment or devotion to religious faith and worship
- An institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices
- A cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith

Religious:

- Relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or person
- Relating to or devoted to religious beliefs or observances
- Scrupulously and conscientiously faithful

Religiosity:

- Especially, excessively, obtrusively, or sentimentally religious

Soul:

- The immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life
- The spiritual principle embodied in human beings, all rational and spiritual beings, or the universe

- A person's total self
- A moving spirit
- The moral and emotional nature of human beings
- The quantity that arouses emotion and/ or sentiment
- Spiritual or moral force

Spirit:

- An animating or vital principle that gives life to physical organisms
- A supernatural being or essence such as Holy Spirit or Great Spirit
- The immaterial intelligent or sentient part of a person

Spiritual

- Of or relating to, consisting of, or altering the spirit
- Of or related to sacred matters, i.e., spiritual beings
- Concerned with religious values
- Of or relating to supernatural beings

Spirituality

- Something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to the cleric
- Sensitivity to or attachment to religious values
- The quality or state of being spiritual

iEndnotes

Copyleft image of a Mobius-strip. Photographer David Bernbernick, Creative Commons/Wikipedia. Retrieve from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M%C3%B6bius_strip.jpg

ii Overton, P. (1975). *The Learning Tree*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany Press.

iii Doyle, T. P. (2009). The Spiritual Trauma Experienced by Victims of Sexual Abuse by Catholic Clergy (pp. 239-260). *Pastoral Psychology* 58, p. 242.

iv Levine, P. A. (2010). *In An Unspoken Voice: How the body releases trauma and restores goodness*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

v Pert, C. B., (1997). *Molecules of Emotion: Why You Feel the Way You Feel*. New York, NY: Scribners.

vi See the glossary to this document for dictionary definitions of these words as they are used in the commons.

vii Doyle, T. P. (January, 2006). Clericalism: Enabler of Clergy Sexual Abuse (pp. 189-213). *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* 54(3);

viii Benkert, M. and Doyle, T. P. (November 17, 2008). *Religious Duress and Its Impact on Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse*. Retrieve from http://www.awrsipe.com/Doyle/2008/2008-11-27-Religious_Duress5.pdf; See also Doyle, T. P. (January, 2003). Roman Catholic Clericalism, Religious Duress, and Clergy Sexual Abuse (pp. 189-213). *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* 51 (3).
see also

ix Jordan, M. D. (2003). *Telling Truths in Church: Scandal, Flesh and Christian Speech*. Boston, MA: Beacon.

x Doyle, T. P., Sipe, A. W. R. and Wall, P. (2006). *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes: The Catholic Church's 2000 Year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuse*. Boulder, CO: Taylor Trade Publishing

xi Summary of DSM-V Criteria: Retrieve from <http://www.brainlinemilitary.org/content/2014/06/dsm-v-tr-criteria-for-ptsd.html>

xii Matthew 23:27, NIV: *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like white washed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.*

xiii Merriam-Webster Online: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

xiv Geertz, C. (1977). *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York, NY: Basic Books, p. 5.

xv Ibid.

xvi Ibid.

xvii MacDonald, D. P. (1995). *Transgressive Corporeality: The Body, Poststructuralism, and the Theological Imagination*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.

xviii Doyle, T. P. and Benkert, M. (2009). Clericalism, Religious Duress, and Its Psychological Impact on Victims of Clergy Abuse (pp. 223-238). *Pastoral Psychology*, vol. 58.

xix A very good and very thorough discussion of bystander denial can be found in Cohen, S. (2001). *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

xx Barsade, S. (October 15, 2014). Faster than a Speeding Text: "Emotional Contagion at Work." *Psychology Today Online*. Retrieve from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-science-work/201410/faster-speeding-text-emotional-contagion-work>

xxi Herman, J. (1997). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- xxii Boundary Issues: Conceptual Model by Ellen H. Swanson, holistic nurse practitioner
- Upper left corner – the individual with totally open boundaries, in essence no boundaries
- Lower left corner – the individual with totally closed boundaries
 - Upper right corner – the individual with totally closed boundaries, ready to attack any and all who approach
 - Lower right corner – the individual with permeable boundaries that can be opened or closed at the individual's choosing

xxiii Online Recording Address: <http://www.c-span.org/video/?312229-1/book-discussion-mortal-sins>.

xxiv (a) Herman, J. L. (1997). Op. Cit., See also (b) Mendelsohn, M., Herman, J. L., Schatzoa, E., Coco, M., Kallivayalii, D. and Levitan, J.

(2011). *The Trauma Recovery Group: A Guide for Practitioners*. New York, NY: Guilford Press; (c) See also Herman, J. L. (May 10, 2013). The Politics of Trauma: An interview with Judith Herman in Caruth, C. (2014). *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in The Theory and Treatment of Catastrophic Experience*. Baltimore, MD. John Hopkins Press.

xxv Kennell, A. (May 10, 2017). A Crisis of Faith: In Support of Kay Ellen. *Our Stories Untold Blog*. <http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/a-crisis-of-faith/>

xxvi Doyle, T. P. (2008). SNAP Conference Address: *The Survival of the Spirit While Mired in the Toxic Wastes of the Ecclesiastical Swamp*. Retrieve from: <http://www.awrsipe.com/Dialogue/Dialogue-17-2008-08-11.html>

xxvii See Detweiler, S. (January 9, 2015). John Howard Yoder: My Untold Story after 36 Years of Silence. Blog: *Our Stories Untold*. Retrieve from <http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/?s=Sharon+Detweiler>

xxviii Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma*. New York, NY: Free Press/Macmillan International; See also Freyd, J. J. and Burrell, P. (2013). *Blind to Betrayal: Why We Fool Ourselves We Aren't Being Fooled*. New York, NY: Wiley; See also

xxix Kauffman, J., Ed. (2002). *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*. New York, NY: Routledge.

(a) Freyd, J. J. (1996). *Betrayal Trauma: The Legacy of Forgetting Childhood Abuse*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; (b) Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma*. New York, NY: Free Press/Macmillan International; (c) Kauffman, J. (2002). (Ed.). *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*. New York, NY: Routledge.

xxx See <http://www.homestar.org/bryannan/myth.html>

xxxi Ram Dass (December 17, 2012) *A Letter to Rachel*. Retrieve from <https://www.ramdass.org/a-letter-to-rachel/>

See also Rachel's father Steve and her mother Anita as they share Ram Dass' spiritual teaching to them after the murder of their daughter (May 17, 2011). You Tube discussion of Ram Dass' *A Letter to Rachel*. Retrieve from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yqJrezngtw>

xxxii Personal Electronic Communication, (May 16, 2017).

xxxiii Kauffman, J., Ed. (2002). *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*. New York, NY: Routledge

xxxiv Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma*. New York, NY: Free Press//Macmillan International.

xxxv Conceptual Model by Ruth E. Krall illustrating the principle that religious and spiritual consequences of betrayal and abuse are mediated by beliefs and thoughts.

xxxvi Ram Dass, Op. Cit.

xxxvii Anonymous (December 27, 2015). Living a Myth: *Questions from a Ewe*. Retrieve from <http://questionsfromaewe.blogspot.com/>

xxxviii In 2015, for example, the Boston Diocese hired a political strategist to poll active and inactive Catholics in Eastern Massachusetts. Boston Globe Reporter Lisa Wangsness (November 28, 2015) included the following data in her report.

- 1.8 million baptized Roman Catholics in the diocese
- 16% attend mass on a weekly basis – down from 70% in 1970

One of those surveyed, author Jennifer Hughes, attributed the survey to the church's marketing problems: *We're not getting new users. Our image is tarnished. We are not attracting youth.*

Retrieve from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/11/28/archdiocese-boston-surveys-catholics-about-church-and-its-leaders/WoyXk8SltfglZLmj1dYv2H/story.html>

Using attendance at mass as a significant indicator of the levels of belief and commitment is the research question most asked. Current research appears to indicate that almost 1/3 of baptized Catholics rarely or never attend mass – with the exceptions made for weddings and funerals. In light of this paper, what is being measured is religiosity. See this website for cumulative random polls and survey statistics.

<http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/FRStats/massattendweek.pdf>

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