

Brock University Guest Lecturer

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In 1995-96, I was a guest lecturer to an interdisciplinary class. I began by asking the students what topics they were covering that term. I fashioned my talk in such a way that it weaved together into a whole as it joined the subjects they had been discussing.

The Lecture

Preparation for UnHoly Orders:

In 1992-93 there were four courses offered at a liberal seminary that I had been interested in while researching my book UnHoly Orders:

CONGREGATIONS: THEOLOGICAL ETHICS AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS—Theological, ethical and social analysis of the structure of congregations; patterns of leadership and authority; concepts of power, stewardship and character formation.

VIRTUES AND VICES: Philosophical and theological interpretations of virtue and character formation; the role of narrative in shaping moral self-understanding and moral practice. The seminar will focus on classical and contemporary moral philosophers and theologians, including Aristotle, Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, Philippa Foot.

SUFFERING, EVIL, AND THE GOD OF LOVE: a critical analysis of theodicy in light of human suffering, tragedy, and injustice.

MORAL THEOLOGY AND ECCLESIAL PRACTICE: a critical inquiry into the norms and principles of moral theology and social ethics, particularly in the xxxxxxxx tradition; their implications for pastoral ministry and ecclesial practice in a moral ambiguous and culturally pluralistic world.

All of these courses were suitable for my master degree and they were taught by one man. I was very impressed. I was certain that this man would be able to help me explore solutions to sexual abuse by clergy. He certainly would be deemed a “safe place to be” by many female divinity students. These courses would give me the solid background for my research.

Alas, for this man died suddenly while performing the Eucharist and the courses were not offered. I felt a loss. In more efforts to research this book, I spoke to this person’s denomination’s sexual abuse committee member, and a local police officer

who spoke to me only if I didn't use his name (and this after his superior referred me to him to research this book). Between these two people I discovered that the professor I almost studied under had been charged with sexual assault of female students. I am certain that my academic advisors had known about this but nothing was said to warn me. They just gave each other knowing looks to each other after I told them why I had wanted to take these courses.

One brave divinity student reported this common occurrence of this professor to the police when it started happening to her. It is called a complaint. The police investigated and found ample evidence to lay charges and go to court.

How did the church and seminary react? Well, the woman who went to the police was forbidden ordination until she apologized for going to the police.

Think about it. The seminary knew about his behavior but it was business as usual. This breaking the silence, and breaking rank by going to legal authorities is the unpardonable sin of the church institutional world. Anything else goes.

For some time, the woman refused to apologize. After about a year, she realized they were not asking her to recant, to deny the events actually happened, but only to apologize for going to the police. Consequently she did eventually apologize in order to get her own life back on track, that is, to get ordained. This is a classic example of why clergy abuse in the 1990's was not being reported and why there were no news reports of this rampant dilemma.

The man dropped dead giving the Eucharist.

Answering the Burning and Primary Question

How *do* you assess sexual harassers and abusers in the church? That is the crucial question I address and answer in **UnHoly Orders**.

I asked the class:

- How would you identify an abuser in any walk of life?
- Have any of you in residence received information on how to avoid date rape?

I begin with discussing the acquaintance/date rapist. There are certain behavioral characteristicsⁱ which tend to be exhibited frequently by the acquaintance/date rapist:

1. Immature behavior, little true empathy or feeling for others and displays little social conscience.
2. Anger and aggression toward women, not necessarily directly to you. General negative reference to women, vulgarity, curtness toward others and the like. Often views women as adversaries.
3. Acts macho and discusses acts of physical prowess. Displays a short temper, slaps and/or twists arms.
4. Be especially suspicious of excessive jealous possessive behavior about you if you have recently met the person or on a first date.
5. Ignores your space boundaries by being too close or placing his hand on your thigh, and so on, especially when done in public.
6. Ignores your wishes.
7. Attempts to make you feel guilty or accuses you of being "uptight."
8. Becomes hostile and increasingly more aggressive when you say "no."
9. Insists on being alone with you.
10. Asks personal questions and is interested in knowing more about you than you want to tell him.

Many acquaintance and date rapists plan for the rape and then set out to find the victim. They often test potential victims. For example, a rapist may try placing a hand on a potential victim's thigh. If the potential victim does not react, even if obviously uncomfortable, the rapist identifies her as easy prey.

Abusive clergy are no better than the average garden variety rapist. The pastoral office gives clergy a right to visit to your home, to talk with you alone in his office, to comfort you in times of bereavement when you are at your lowest. Their time is their own when they can rationalize that every moment with you is "pastoral care." These clergy in the same abusive environment as we all have with pornography in many stores [and prolific online]. What is more, they know they can get away with it. In Chapter 8 of *UnHoly Orders* I have a report on pornography and what to do about it [admittedly dated now].

A male colleague, who had trained in the seminary in Rome, told me of the pornographic material the student priests had around to tempt themselves to see if they are strong enough to stay celibate after their final vows.

There is the case of the female divinity student who was sexually assaulted by the various male clergy from whom she had to obtain approval as she progressed

toward ordination. Her ordination was slow in coming, but it came. My sources were so protective of her that they did not give me her name to interview her.

Another woman with a history of abuse within the family could not understand that she had been used by her priest because she focused on the imposing celibacy vow, rendering a “poor oppressed priest” image and letting herself be defined by her function to “service” this priest. (Some clergy see this celibacy vow as an injunction merely not to marry. They claim they didn’t vow to remain “chaste.”)

Psychological Gaming

Our society has trouble with issues of lust and seduction. I have coined the phrase “Seduction – the OK sin” in *UnHoly Orders*. Seduction is like the hot-wiring of a car. It doesn’t belong to you. You don’t have the key. You don’t have a right. It is the trespassing of boundaries, making it go. There is nothing flattering or romantic about anyone, much less a cleric, exercising his manipulative talent on you.

Some, in unraveling this puzzle, would site Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden for causal clues. Of course, you know the biggest line, that we women are all seductive temptresses. So, it is our fault, don’t you know? See the botched interpretation of the temptation in the Garden of Eden. Eve rightly longed for wisdom. The serpent offered her knowledge of good and evil instead. It isn’t even the same thing. Not having wisdom yet, she fell for the serpent’s word game and succumbed to the temptation.

After she and Adam ate the fruit, she was older and wiser than most of us. Adam, not having sought for wisdom anyway, cops out of the game altogether.

Clergy abuse books are often written in a journalistic style with a collection of case studies. Occasionally, sexual abuse policies are outlined as a solution to this dilemma. However, I write with a post-policy perspective. One divinity student in a major denomination was propositioned by a cleric as a prerequisite before continuing her studies. She reported the offence through proper church channels. Eight years later she still was being stalled from her day in church court or from a hearing. Her ministry continued to be derailed.

Women sometimes seek judgment in court because they think that is the only way they can get on with their lives. Yet it may not be the best solution for them. One woman waited to get to court because she felt that a guilty verdict would somehow

mystically convince her perpetrator about the error of his ways. This is an example of women spinning their wheels and getting nowhere fast.

Yet help to heal is hard to find. Consequently I have prepared UnHoly Orders. I have walked away from the adversarial model and embraced a healing model instead, organized in five parts:

1. Identify the Behavioural Problem
2. Identify the Environmental Influence
3. Collective Behaviour
4. Move Beyond the Impasse
5. Recovery Resources

One priest admitted to having been molested by a seminarian as a boy. When he reported it to a priest, he was told to forget about it. So, the priest tells me, he did forget about it. He was having a difficult time accepting he was abused. Yet, as I carefully listened to him around the table at a sexual assault symposium, he admitted to being “a hugging person.” This is an indicator of possible boundary problems. He is a potential abuser if he is not one already. My heart goes out to such people. UnHoly Orders helps not only the primary targets and the secondary victims of sexual abuse, but the perpetrator as well.

Spirituality is incarnate, made manifest in our actions with each other. We need to own our responsibility for our own choices. The ordained office is a tempting place to be for those who need to be needed and for those who crave instant intimacy May this serve as a caution to all humanity.

ⁱ Booker, Janet A. (1996). *UnHoly Orders: Abuse of Power That Tempts Us All; the identification and recovery process from sexual harassment and assault by clergy and other religious leaders*. FreedomLine Enterprises, St. Catharines, ON, pp. 10-11. From *Characteristics of Acquaintance/Date Rapists* by Carol Andrews Prichard from the book *Avoiding Rape On and Off Campus* (reprinted by permission).