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THE FATHER GOD AND TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS
OF SUFFERING, GUILT, ANGER AND FORGIVENESS AS IMPEDIMENTS
TO RECOVERY FROM FATHER-DAUGHTER INCEST

Dissertation submitted to the Department of
Religious Studies and the School of Graduate
Studies, University of Ottawa in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Philosophy.



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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis of this dissertation suggested that certain teachings of traditional Christianity would make it difficult for a Christian daughter who was sexually assaulted by her father to successfully recover from the trauma. To see if this could be the case, I first looked at the psychological damage done to the daughter who is sexually assaulted by her father from the perspective of the research of authors such as Florence Rush, Judith Herman, E. Sue Blume, Diana Russell, Ellen Bass, Laura Davis, David Finkelhor, Louise Armstrong, Susanne Sgroi and Roland Summit. I then analyzed what little references there are to father-daughter sexual assault and physical and sexual child abuse in the literature that dealt with aspects of Christianity that were relevant to father-daughter sexual assault, in terms of occurrence of father-daughter incest in Christian environments, the impact of Christianity on the abuse and recovery, or the impact of sexual assault on Christian beliefs. Following that, I analyzed the biblical texts for their input into the problem by focusing on the story of Lot and his daughters and the kinship rules of Leviticus 18. In the same chapter, I discussed the story of eleven-year-old Maria Goretti who was canonized for resisting the sexual advances of a young man living in her household, and dying because of that resistance. There was almost nothing in either of these chapters that would suggest that there was anything in Christianity that would cause a special problem for a believing daughter who was sexually assaulted by her father save in the work of Dutch authors, Annie Imbens-Fransen and Ineke Jonkers, and the recent work of James Poling. These authors, who have worked extensively with Christian abusers and victims, indicted the patriarchal power and belief structure of traditional Christianity as a source of extreme pain for sexually assaulted Christians and for Christian abusers. After a critique of the analysis of god as a transitional god, it is suggested that in order to understand the impact of the Christian belief system on victims of father-daughter incest, it would be better to view the anthropomorphic Christian god as a second male parent for the daughter, albeit a super-father. This done, the last chapter looks at what the process of recovery should entail according to the authors mentioned in the second chapter. Aspects of the recovery process are compared to traditional Christian teachings on issues such as suffering, guilt, anger and forgiveness. It was discovered that the Christian teachings are often at odds with the necessities of the recovery process. This would mean that a Christian daughter who was sexually assaulted by her father would have to overcome resistances caused by her belief system as well as the inherent difficulties which victims have in order to become survivors.

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I must begin these acknowledgements by thanking my husband, Dr. Ralph Calistro and my children, Redmond and Daniel Weissenberger. Their support and encouragement has never wavered. I would also thank my mother, Clasina Redmond, for her support even when she wasn't sure just where my work would lead. I would also like to acknowledge my father's belief that I could do something like this. Though he died eighteen years ago, my memories of him have helped during some of the more excruciating parts of the research. He reminds me that there are fathers who do their best, who don't abuse their children sexually, who don't batter their wives and who care about others.

I would also like to thank everyone in the Department of Religious Studies who has listened to me, taught me and argued with me over the years. In particular, I would thank Lise Hotte, whose help and advice over the years has been invaluable, and Dr. Naomi Goldenberg, my thesis advisor. Most importantly, I need to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Roger Lapointe, without whose courage and understanding, I might never have begun this program. I would also thank the School of Graduate Studies, the Department of Religious Studies, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Ways and Means Fund of the Canadian Union of Educational Workers, Local 10 for their financial support during these years.

Finally, I and my family owe a special debt to Dr. Neville Taylor who has seen us through some very difficult times and without whom this thesis might never have been written.

I would like to dedicate this thesis with much gratitude to my parents, Clasina Redmond and David Ernest Redmond and to my father-in-law, Ralph Frank Calistro, Sr., who died in Ottawa, May 17, 1992 from Alzheimer's Disease. His courage in living with this debilitating disease and death have changed my life in a very profound way.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

By fruits ye shall know them; not by their roots.¹

Newspapers, magazine articles, TV talk shows, medical journals, sociology books, psychology books, anthropology books, first person stories - the list could go on and on - the sexual use of children by adults for their own gratification has become a 'cause célèbre' in the 1980s. Adult use of children for sexual gratification cannot be considered solely a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. If historical and sociological research continues to be indicative of the past situation, the appropriation of children for the sexual use of adults is a widespread phenomenon and has been so for centuries.² Legitimation of paedophilia has a long history in western culture. From Plato to the more recent paedophilia associations, arguments for the legitimation of paedophilia have been primarily concerned with justifications of adult male/male child sexual relationships.³ However, adult

¹William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 34.

²L. De Mause, ed., The History of Childhood: The Untold Story of Child Abuse (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1988(1974), Martin Kendrick, Anatomy of a Nightmare: The Failure of Society in Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, Limited, 1988).

³Florence Rush, The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Assault of Children (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1980) discusses these issues at

male/female child relationships have more often been legitimated through marital bonds and by the fact that females have historically been under the complete control of their male parent or guardian. It is only recently that there has been any widespread acceptance that the early or premature sexualization of females by adults should be seen as detrimental to the full human development of women and as a major factor in the shaping of their psychological profile. It is also being suggested, but is as yet not so clear, that the premature sexualization of males has a similar impact, although the way in which the reaction manifests itself is very different.⁴ Although the effects on the long term development of the male and female are different, it is beginning to be understood that the effects of premature sexualization have

length, including the present day paedophile's manifesto. Meyer Levin's book, whose main character, Sid Silver, is in part Levin himself, explains the attitude they had towards Plato et al. which indicates how uncritically these thinkers' attitudes towards adult child sexual relationships and homosexuality were viewed. Meyer Levin, Compulsion (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1956). Hal Higdon's book, The Crime of the Century: The Leopold and Loeb Case (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975) details the psychiatric evaluations which tell how Nathan Leopold was sexually abused as a child. With today's knowledge of the impact of child sexual assault, it would be better to reinterpret Leopold's compulsive sexual behaviour with Artie Loeb as behaviour based on a repetition compulsion rather than calling it homosexual. Philip Charles Kronk, A Reanalysis of the Leopold-Loeb Psychiatric Trial Testimony: An Object Relations Theory and Borderline State Perspective Phd dissertation (Knoxville, Tenn: University of Tennessee, 1978).

⁴T. Thomas, Men Surviving Incest: A Male Survivor Shares the Process of Recovery (Walnut Creek, CA: Launch Press, 1989). Judith V. Becker, "The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse on Adolescent Sexual Offenders" in Gail E. Wyatt and Gloria J. Powell, eds, Lasting Effects of Child Sexual Abuse (London: Sage Publications, 1988), pp. 193-209. Mark Cook and Kevin Howells, eds, Adult Sexual Interest in Children (Toronto: Academic Press, 1981).

societal consequences which are less acceptable than they were when western society was exclusively patriarchal in structure and thought. This is particularly evident with regard to society's attitude to the female members of the population.

The nature of patriarchal society has for centuries given males virtually unrestricted access to females and to children. Adult females, and female and male children, were perceived as the property of their male relatives and caretakers. These men could exercise whatever form of control they wished against women and children, with little fear of reprisal from either the state or the church.⁵

For almost a millennium and a half, the structures and anthropology of Western societies have been based on the Christian weltanschauung. Since there is a tendency on the part of believers and, surprisingly, nominal believers and even many non-believers, to think that somehow 'religions' and 'religious' people have a greater monopoly on morality or moral thinking, the "good" is often seen as religious and the "bad" is seen as non-religious or secular.⁶ Because religions presumably operate for the good - which is seldom clearly defined - when evil occurs it is argued

⁵Stephen Ozment, When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English, For Her Own Good (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1979), Marilyn French, Beyond Power: On Women, Men, and Morals (New York: Summit Books, 1985), Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁶Anne L. Horton and Judith A. Williamson, eds, Religion and Abuse: When Praying Isn't Enough (Toronto: Lexington Books/D. C. Heath and Company, 1988), pp. 1-12.

that it must have its genesis elsewhere, in something other than the religious belief system, such as Satan, human nature, secular humanism or even bad luck. Conversely, when something good happens, Christians often credit God rather than see their personal role in the creation of the good 'fortune'.⁷ Thus, it is not hard to see that people do not readily accept the idea that there is a "Christian context" for father-daughter incest.

Writers outside the fields of theology and religious studies have identified patriarchal religions as being partly responsible for the sins committed against society's children.⁸ While it may be true that, as Christian apologists like to suggest, Christianity only happens to be patriarchal because the society in which it developed was, Christianity as a religion and an institution honed misogyny and the institution of patriarchy into a finely tuned piece of machinery based on a neo-platonic model of hierarchical authority, beginning with the authority of god.⁹ This model was elaborated by the 'chain of being' hermeneutic, and the

⁷See M. Lalljee, L. B. Brown and D. Hilton, "The Relationships between Images of God, Explanations for Failure to Do One's Duty to God and Invoking God's Agency," Journal of Psychology and Theology 18:2(1990), pp. 166-73.

⁸Alice Miller, For Your Own Good: Hidden cruelty in child-rearing and the roots of violence, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum, second edition (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984(1980)) and Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child, trans. Hildegard and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984(1981)), B. F. Steele and C. B. Pollock, "A Psychiatric Study of Parents Who Abuse Infants and Small Children" in R. E. Helfer and C. H. Kempe, eds, The Battered Child, second edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974(1968)), pp. 89-133.

⁹Lerner, Creation, French, Morals.

evolutionary thought of the 19th century was inevitably integrated by Christianity as further justification of male superiority. The foundation for this attitude towards authority and the accompanying model of the family is found in the anthropomorphic conception of the Christian deity as male and father and believers as his children. Although the official theological position of Christian monotheism argues that one cannot assign anthropomorphic characteristics to its god, attempts to 'desex' or use multiple anthropomorphic terms for this god have met with strong resistance in much of western Christianity.¹⁰ The patriarchal, hierarchical and authoritarian god of Christianity has been considered male almost exclusively until the recent feminist movement.¹¹

The idea that certain behaviours towards children constitute child abuse is in many ways a product of the last century and has become a broader social issue in the public mind only in the last thirty years. The actuality of child sexual abuse, the frequency of the sexual abuse of children, and the devastation which it causes in the lives of those who have been sexually abused as children is a phenomenon which has only been addressed in any

¹⁰Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

¹¹J. A. Phillips, Eve: The History of an Idea (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984) is probably one of the most succinct and sound analyses of this development of god as male and father, and the impact it has had on the consciousness of a people and the development of misogyny. Another book which passionately argues for the need for the destruction of the male patriarchal god of Christianity because of its apocalyptic, destructive attitude towards humanity is E. Reynaud's Holy Virility: The Social Construction of Masculinity, trans. Ros Schwartz (London: Pluto Press, 1983(1981)).

serious fashion in the last ten years. There are many reasons for the failure to address this serious psychological problem. The idea that children are uncivilized bundles of negative drives that have to be "whipped into shape" in order that they may function in a civilized society is a notion that is still predominant in the minds of many people and is mirrored in the popular culture.¹²

Child abuse is currently defined in such a way that it includes behaviours towards children which only several decades ago were accepted as normal child rearing practices. The high profile of child abuse issues has brought forth so many cases and types of abuse that the problem can appear to be overwhelming. While most people would not accept the idea that they are in favour of child abuse, there are many subtle and not so subtle ways in which the abuse of children, whether emotional, psychological, neglectful, violent or sexual, can be seen to be acceptable at some level in western culture for their (the children's) own good.¹³ The question of proper child-rearing methods is in great flux at the present moment and the arguments are often based on the views

¹²Letty C. Pogrebin, Family Politics: Love and Power on an Intimate Frontier (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983) and Louise Armstrong, The Home Front: Notes From the Family War Zone (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983). James Ritchie and Jane Ritchie, Spare the Rod (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia Pte Ltd, 1981). Philip Greven, The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child Rearing, Root Experience and the Self in Early America (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1971), and Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991), R. Murray Thomas, Comparing Theories of Child Development (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Ltd, 1979).

¹³Greven, Spare the Child, Miller, For Your Own Good.

regarding the genesis of, for example, violence. The home was, and to a large extent still is, considered inviolable.¹⁴

The broader context for any discussion of child sexual abuse is the question of child abuse and society's attitudes towards its children, epitomized by the acceptance of physical violence in the disciplining of children.¹⁵ The problem of child abuse, of which sexual abuse is just one part, revolves around the role and structure of family within the society. It seems to be very hard for many people to understand that when they hit, i.e. spank, a child when she or he has done something wrong, they are teaching the child that violence is an appropriate method of forcing someone

¹⁴The problem of family inviolability is one which will only be touched on in the thesis, although it is one of the great beliefs of modern popular Christianity. However, there are serious questions here which are being discussed and analyzed in social work, family therapy, politics, economics, social critiques, feminist analysis, Marxist concerns and philosophical psychoanalytic discourse. See Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh, The Anti-social Family (London: Verso Editions/NLB, 1985(1982)), Jacques Donzelot, The Policing of Families (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), B. Thorne and M. Yalom, eds, Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions (New York: Longman's Inc., 1982), Luepnitz, Feminist Family Therapy, Armstrong, Home Front. Those who feel that the family is "under siege" and call for a return to the 'good old days' are in many ways calling for the strengthening of the model of male patriarchal and authoritarian rule, albeit a return to benevolent dictatorship, but male domination nevertheless. See Christopher Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged (New York: Basic Books. 1977), Ozment, When Fathers Ruled, Brigitte Berger and Peter L. Berger, The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground (New York: Anchor Books, 1984).

¹⁵Greven, Spare the Child. Jean Renvoise, Incest: A Family Pattern (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 66-7. See the controversy over A. S. Neill's Summerhill (New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc, 1960) and Freedom Not License (New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1966) in N. W. Ackerman et al, Summerhill For and Against (New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1970).

to do what she or he wants them to do. The patriarchal family structure has allowed for the systematic devaluation of women as human beings. By association their offspring have also been devalued.¹⁶ There is a link between the ways in which children are raised and the needs of the society in which they are expected to live. Part of the reason for specific aspects of a given child-rearing process is so that it will better enable these children to function as adults and take their place in a specific type of structured adult world. Parental expectations and societal expectations play a large role in creating the kind of environment into which a child is expected to fit.¹⁷

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse, the problems, its impact, prognosis after abuse and ethical issues constitute the latest area of the child-rearing methods of western society to be the focus of attention of medical professionals, social workers, and other health care

¹⁶Lerner, Creation, French, Morals, Pogrebin, Family Politics, Joseph Shepher, Incest: A Biosocial View (New York; Academic Press, 1983).

¹⁷John Holt, Escape From Childhood: The Needs and Rights of Children (New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1974), Neill, Summerhill, Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion (London: Abacus, 1962), Escape From Freedom (New York: Avon Books, 1985(1941)), The Sane Society (Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1955), Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society, World Perspectives XLIV (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971). There is much to be said and has been said regarding, for example, the restrictiveness of the school system which prepares children for the restrictive conditions of most of the jobs that a western consumer-oriented society offers.

professionals and advocacy workers. From the number of personal stories and case histories of 'latent' victims, i.e. women and men who were victims of sexual abuse as children, this is far from just a recent phenomenon, although as little as 15 years ago it was considered a minor social problem.¹⁸

The phrases used to describe the phenomenon of child sexual abuse are 'common secret', 'secret trauma', 'hidden victims', 'silent victims', 'conspiracy of silence', 'beyond belief', 'best kept secret' and 'secret survivor.' These words all have one question which arises from them, "Why has this problem remained so secret for so long?" One of the reasons is that until a behaviour is defined as a problem, i.e., that it has, and how it has, deleterious effects on the people on whom it has been perpetrated, it is an acceptable part of social interaction. For example, physical punishment or discipline, the use of the strap, grabbing children and shoving them, have all been, with few dissenters, acceptable parts of child rearing practices until recently.¹⁹ It is only since the work of Kempe and the notion of the 'battered child syndrome' became a medical reality that more widespread support has been given to the idea that physical punishment was

¹⁸Louise Armstrong, Kiss Daddy Goodnight (New York: Pocket Books, 1978), E. Bass and L. Thornton, eds., I Never Told Anyone (New York: Harper, Colophon Books, 1983), K. Brady, Father's Days (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1979).

¹⁹David G. Gil, Violence Against Children: Physical Child Abuse in the United States (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970).

harmful and should be determined to be abusive and labelled as assault.²⁰ The cycle of violence begins in the home with the spanking of children.²¹

This problem of the lack of definition of a problem is nowhere more obvious than with the issue of child sexual abuse. The use of children for adult sexual gratification cuts across all class, race, economic and religious lines. The ramifications which arise from our present state of knowledge in this area relate specifically to questions concerning the underlying presuppositions of our society. Our present understanding of the dynamics of this type of abuse is beginning to undermine the foundations of the traditional view of the parent/child relationship in a way that not even the questions of physical battering of children was able to do. The idea that children are important, that they are to be cherished and shielded from life's discomforts, is being shown to be more myth than fact. The reality is that children only have as much power or control as the adults and institutions around them allow them to have.²² Our world is not only *androcentric* but it is first and foremost *adocentric*. The responsibilities of our

²⁰C. Henry Kempe and Ray E. Helfer, eds., The Battered Child, third edition, revised and expanded (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980). The earlier versions of this text under the same title also contain important articles. Lloyd De Mause, ed., The History of Childhood (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974).

²¹Suzanne K. Steinmetz, The Cycle of Violence: Assertive, Aggressive, and Abusive Family Interaction, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), Murray Strauss, Richard J. Gelles, S. K. Steinmetz, Behind Closed Doors, Violence in the American Family (New York: Anchor Press(Doubleday), 1980).

²²Holt, Escape From Childhood.

adocentric society to nurture and rear its children has been often ignored and forfeited. In the area of child sexual abuse, the culprits are overwhelmingly male.²³ What we see is that the punishment for robbery far outweighs the systematic soul destruction of a child. Furthermore, no matter what was done to them, the children have little recourse and no right to retaliate against the abusers without the full weight of adult society's approbation being felt by them.²⁴

Common Elements in Christianity

Particular notions of god have always been attacked from without but more often than not from within a particular religious system. This is true of Christianity, an overriding term for a system of beliefs, structures that contain almost as many varieties as there are Christians. Christian beliefs come with some very highly developed theological structures. It is a peculiarly individualized religion, emphasizing the personal character of its god and the personal nature of its salvation and has created its own social world. However, in the eyes of many believers, the

²³The abusers responsible for physical assault on children are more evenly split between males and females.

²⁴John Crewdson, By Silence Betrayed: Sexual Abuse of Children in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), Michael Harris, Unholy Orders: Tragedy at Mount Cashel (Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada, Ltd., 1990), W. L. Marshall and Sylvia Barrett, Criminal Neglect: Why Sex Offenders Go Free (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd, 1990), Kevin Marron, Ritual Abuse: Canada's Most Infamous Trial on Child Abuse (Toronto: Seal Books, 1988).

social world does not appear to play a significant role in the primary background of the founding text of this religion, the New Testament. Yet, as recent work on the social sciences and the New Testament indicate, there were great differences between the different books of the New Testament and the societies in which they originated.²⁵ Since this text is normative for this religion, by placing greater importance on different points, a great multiplicity of thought is found within Christianity which led to the institutionalized nature of some of its larger sects, an emphasis on social gospel by some groups and self-contained smaller introspective groups.

This creates a problem for the researcher when attempting to write about Christianity as if it were one religion. While Christianity cannot be considered a homogeneous movement despite the ecumenism of recent decades; the concepts of sin and guilt, for example, are central to any Christian theology. There are also other fundamental aspects of Christianity which are present in almost all of the different groups of this religion. In general, one can say that for most, if not all, Christians the world is something which is evil at worst and imperfect at best. This is

²⁵John G. Gager, Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice -Hall, 1975), Luke T. Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity, second edition, enlarged (Philadelphia: Fortress Presss, 1983), Wayne Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth, trans. and ed. John H. Schutz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

always the fault of the human race, whether because of the fall in the Garden of Eden or some nebulous imperfection which must be atoned for by all humans. All Christians hope for salvation and perfection in the next world, and this is to be achieved primarily through the grace of their God, however that grace may be received. These commonalities also include a) the central position of Christianity, that Jesus(Christ, God) died on the cross to save humanity from an original sin, thereby making the necessary atonement for all humanity, and was resurrected to show that death and sin no longer hold sway; b) the adherence to the New Testament and, for most, the Old Testament as the revealed works of its god; c) the belief that its god maintains a personal, individual interest in human beings and in history. The emphasis which each of these aspects are given will vary from denomination to denomination.

Hypothesis

Christianity through the belief system created around its particular god construction, reinforces and augments guilt and personal responsibility and thus plays a major role in impeding recovery in Christian daughters who are sexually abused by their fathers.

This implies that sexually abused Christian children have a more difficult time in recovering from their abuse and are given a double burden by the god construction of this religion. Furthermore, it suggests that the recovery process can be blocked by the religious system because of its emphasis on guilt and personal responsibility.

In order to accomplish this task, the thesis will focus on how Christian beliefs and the Christian god-image are explained in traditional Christianity. However, it will not be primarily concerned with the development, or lack thereof, of the god-image of the adult and how it develops during the life-span of an individual Christian.²⁶ Instead, the god-image that children acquire during their formative years will be the focus since these are the beliefs that the sexually abused daughter will bring with her from her childhood.

Methodology

This hypothesis will be explored at length through

a) analyzing the present state of research concerning the impact of sexual abuse trauma on a sexually abused daughter. The road to recovery is sometimes very long and is now being understood through the stories and therapies of 'latent' victims, i.e. adults who were sexually abused as children. The third and fourth chapters will review the literature with reference to the interconnections between Christianity and child sexual assault with a focus on father-daughter incest.

²⁶This is the major focus of the works of authors such as John McDargh, Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and The Study of Religion, (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1983). James Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), Meissner, Life and Faith: Psychological Perspectives on Religious Experience (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987). Robert C. Fuller, Religion & the Life Cycle (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

b) describing the present understanding of how children develop a god-image and integrate religious teachings and values within their developmental structure. The fifth chapter will analyze the views of a number of object relations theorists who focus on the religious structures of Christianity in western culture. It will be suggested that the understanding of god in the above theorists is inadequate to the working through of father-daughter incest issues and an alternate way of viewing the relationship of the Christian god to the child will be proposed. The god of Christianity is given to most Christian children at the time of their birth. This god, then, should be viewed as participating in parental functions - possibly as important an 'object' with whom relationships are created as are the parents. Therefore, the god will be intimately involved in the child's development and in the events surrounding the sexual assault. Furthermore, because traditionally in Christianity parallels are closely drawn between the father and god, the structure of the father-daughter incest dyad can be focused on particular images and structures in the religious system.

c) comparing the major steps which make up the recovery process from the trauma of father-daughter incest with the basic Christian beliefs and principles regarding sin and guilt (personal responsibility), sexuality, authority issues, suffering and forgiveness through their biblical and traditional understanding will be the focus of the last chapter. The reorganization of the original perceptions of these issues serves as an important

stepping stone in the recovery process. Therefore, these beliefs and principles have a particular relevance to the discussion of child sexual abuse. They are part of the belief structure which has a bearing on the way Christian children should see themselves, their role within the family structure, their relationships to adults, and their place in the world.

Our society has been developing notions of child development which are sometimes at odds with many of the Christian religion's basic notions of the nature of the child and child development, the purpose of child rearing and its methods. Some of the questions which the thesis will address are the following: Is the Christian doctrine organized in such a way as to make children prime targets or 'high risk' for sexual abuse? Does the construction of the role of God as transitional object serve a useful purpose in the context of incest trauma? Are certain types of growth so stunted by sexual abuse that the 'God' object fails to develop and change? Does the emphasis on 'sin' and 'guilt' and human responsibility in Christianity hinder the child/adult in understanding the contextual structures in which the assault occurred? Is there any utility in the Christian foundational belief in original sin and the necessity of the Atonement to help latent victims of child sexual assault when the major issue which has to be dealt with is that they were not, and are not, guilty nor responsible for the sexual assault? These are large questions and given the uniqueness of each individual's experience of god and life, there will be no attempt to answer these questions for the Christian population as a whole.

One problem for the dissertation is that every religious activity is motivationally overdetermined. That is, for believers, their religious system is part of their everyday functioning and interacts with all the other factors of their lives. This makes it very difficult to isolate the impact of religious factors in many of the statistical analyses of religion. Nor is there much agreement on what the results mean. The same problem is evident when trying to isolate the role that the religious factors play in the aetiology and structure of child sexual abuse.²⁷ God representations, like any other mental representation, are complex and compounded. As they develop they accrete bits and pieces from all sorts of different people and experiences. Since I am dealing with a social as well as a psychological problem, the specifics of which are so individualized in each case, the important factors of Christianity which will be discussed will be those that have been identified by victims as the important factors for them. The daughters who are the focus of the thesis became believers by an act of 'fate':²⁸ that is, they happened to be born into a Christian home where traditional Christian values are taught. How that belief system and religious relationships, such as that between the daughter and her god, interact during child sexual abuse trauma will be the focus of the study.

²⁷Michael Argyle and B. Beit-Hallahmi, The Social Psychology of Religion (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

²⁸James Masterson, The Treatment of the Borderline Adolescent: A Developmental Approach (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972).

The Outline of the Thesis

The thesis will consist of six chapters and a bibliography. The first chapter is this introduction. The second chapter, "Trust Betrayed: The Psychological Impact of Father-Daughter Incest", will introduce the problems associated with the sexual assault of a daughter by her father. A discussion concerning definition and prevalence will be followed by a profile of the family in which father-daughter sexual assault occurs. This will be followed by a discussion of the long term impact of incest on the sexually assaulted daughter.

The third chapter, "What About Christianity: Child Sexual Assault and Christianity in the Secondary Literature," will consist of a review of literature. There will be two parts to this review. The first part will analyze how authors who focus on incest and child sexual assault view the impact of the Christian belief system on incest survivors. What values of Christianity do they specify as relevant to the discussion of this issue? The second section will focus on what is said in the Christian literature about incest and child sexual abuse in general. What do these authors see as the problems, what do they see as the cause of incest, what do they offer as solutions to the problems and what do they see as the values which are important to the issue? Most importantly, what do they perceive as the means for recovery of incest within a Christian context?

The fourth chapter, "Whose Fantasy is This? The Biblical and

'Traditional Context of Father-Daughter Incest," will briefly discuss the biblical and traditional material of Christianity. Although there is very limited discussion of incest in the primary text of Christianity, the bible, the centrality of the biblical teachings to all Christians makes what is said (and not said) about this subject of great importance to the victim of father-daughter sexual assault. Traditional material can also play a role in the minds of children. Therefore, the last section of this chapter will focus on the story of Maria Goretti, a victim of child sexual assault who became a Roman Catholic saint. The subsequent writings about Maria use her story as an example of how Christian children should behave with respect to their parents and what their attitudes should be towards sexuality and sexual assault.

Chapter five, "The Created God: The Transitional God and God the Father," explores one of the theoretical positions concerned with the development of a god representation in the life of a child. The concept of god as a transitional object and religion as residing in the transitional sphere has become a recent paradigm in psychology of religion, and the notion of god as a 'transitional object' will be evaluated. It will be suggested that, theoretically, it would be more useful to regard the Christian god as a third parent of a child in order that the impact that the beliefs in the Christian god have on the incest survivor will be better understood. As an integral part of the parenting process, that god will have a role to play in the trauma created by the incest and the recovery process.

The last chapter, "Impediments To Recovery: From Victim to Survivor," will bring together all the information discovered in the preceding chapters and integrate it. This will show the possible impact that particular traditional views of Christian doctrine can have on the therapeutic recovery of an incest victim. The effects that the Christian god and the worldview that that god circumscribes can have on trauma and how the beliefs surrounding the god of the child can interact to block the therapeutic process will be evaluated by comparison with the needs of the recovery process. In this way we show the important effect that the impact of trauma such as incest will have vis-a-vis the daughter's relationship with that god. The beliefs that surround the god of Christianity have an important impact on the manner in which the incest survivor views and explains the incest to herself and to the rest of the world. The conclusion of the research is that these beliefs can interact with a survivor of father-daughter incest to impede, hinder or even stall the process towards optimum recovery from incest.

This dissertation will begin the discussion and offer explanations of some of the interconnections between the Christian ethos and child sexual abuse. That Christianity offers certain answers to these problems is undeniable. What will be analyzed is how useful these answers are in addressing the trauma of father-daughter incest. It will be argued that these answers actually hinder recovery from the sexual assault since the Christian belief system can reinforce and augment guilt and personal responsibility.

These children are then in danger of becoming adults who cannot come to terms with past abuse in order to lead meaningful lives filled with positive relationships since they cannot free themselves from their past. The religious structure does not help them to be free from a guilt which rightly belongs on the shoulders of the perpetrator of the abuse and on the social, cultural and religious systems which have colluded in keeping the children and the adults they become, "gaslighted".²⁹

²⁹This term is derived from the 1944 George Cukor film, "Gaslight." In the film, the character played by Charles Boyer attempts to make his wife, played by Ingrid Bergman, think that she is going crazy. He had previously murdered Ingrid Bergman's aunt and needs free rein to search the house for a hoard of jewels. One of the things that he does to make the Ingrid Bergman character think she is crazy, is to lower and raise the gas lighting in the house. When she comments on it, noone else in the house notices it. Hence the term "gaslighting" as a euphemism to describe phenomenon of believing that something that is true (in this case, that the gas lighting really was lowering and raising) is not true. In the case of sexual assault of children, historically, there is a tradition of women believing that they were responsible for their own abuse.

CHAPTER TWO

TRUST BETRAYED

The Psychological Impact of Father-Daughter Incest

More research is certainly needed, not on why individual fathers do this, not on the profile of the incestuous father, not on the profile of the incestuous family ... but on the core, dramatic issue: What is the nature of the powerful need on the part of so many men to preserve the permission to exploit their children sexually? Dr. [Roland] Summit said to me recently ... 'When I read about ... Gacey, the teenagers murdered in California, the statistics on child molestation in the family - when I realize the numbers victimized by rape - when I look at any aspect of sexual perversion and the sexualization of violence - when I watch thousands in the justice system and in the professions scapegoating the victims, then I have to wonder why we don't look at the inescapable fact that these are activities engaged in almost exclusively by men. ... Why don't we look at the common questions: What is it about men? What is there about the condition of being male that demands exclusive domain and preserves an open season for crimes of sexual violence.'¹

Introduction

Given the increasingly documented negative impact of sexual abuse of children, the obvious question arises, why has the age inappropriate sexualization of children been neglected as a mental health problem for so long? Why did it take so long for it to become apparent that there was a serious problem and that it had a

¹Louise Armstrong, "The Cradle of Sexual Politics: Incest" in M. Kirkpatrick, MD, ed., Women's Sexual Experience: Explorations of the Dark Continent (New York: Plenum Press, 1982), p. 124.

long, long shadow? As C. Henry Kempe has said "The recent growth in child pornography and child prostitution suggests that little has changed over the centuries except the degree of social recognition of the problem by the public at large and gradual development of laws which reflect these communal concerns."²

One reason is that there is much truth to the old adage that "how the twig is bent, so the tree will grow". It might be suggested that no one noticed that there was anything wrong with the way in which the twig was being bent because the tree produced the kind of fruit society expected, needed and wanted. The history of 'patriarchy', the dominant social construction of western society, has been one in which women have been expected to be passive, dependent and sexually useful.³ The result of early sexualization of females plays a focal role in the attainment of that particular mode of behaviour at a deeply embedded psychological level. The premature sexualization of females by adult males appears now to play a major role in the formation of passive, dependent females. As long as passivity and dependency are defined as the "natural" state of the female, the impact of premature sexualization of females by adult males was

²C. Henry Kempe and Ruth Kempe, The Common Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1984), p. 5. See also Roland Summit, "Beyond Belief: The Reluctant Discovery of Incest" in Martha Kirkpatrick, MD, ed., Women's Sexual Experience: Explorations of the Dark Continent (New York: Plenum Press, 1982), pp. 127-50, and "Hidden Victims, Hidden Pain: Societal Avoidance of Child Sexual Abuse" in Gail E. Wyatt and Gloria J. Powell, eds, Lasting Effects of Child Sexual Abuse (Newbury Park CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1988), pp. 39-60.

³Armstrong, "Cradle".

unacknowledged and unrecognizable as a behaviour having major negative repercussions. Sexual passivity and frigidity, some of the accepted dictums for females, can be among the results of child sexual abuse.⁴ Furthermore, until recently, they have been lauded as exemplary behaviours particularly by Christian sexual morality. Thus there would be no reason to look for causes of behaviour that was considered the natural and/or desirable state of the female.

Secondly, there is the 'Emperor's new clothes' syndrome.⁵ The idea that an adult would actually have sexual relationships with children is distasteful to say the least to the majority of people. Coupled with the fact that most of the accused fathers are upstanding men who seem unassailable, there has been a great unwillingness to acknowledge the reality of the problem even when it is staring one in the face.⁶

⁴Its opposite, sexual promiscuity, another possible result of child sexual abuse, has been argued to be a necessity created by the virgin/whore myth of patriarchal religious systems. See Marina Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary (London: Picador, 1985(1976), pp. 224-235. John A. Phillips, Eve: The History of an Idea (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

⁵E. Sue Blume, Secret Survivors Uncovering Incest and Its Aftereffects in Women (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990), pp. 61-74. See Father Jim McHugh's discussion of the problem of the sexual abuse of children by Roman Catholic priests. "An Abuse of Power, A Betrayal of Trust: *The Emperor Has No Clothes*" Grail: An Ecumenical Journal 7:2(1991), pp. 18-39.

⁶Dena Kleiman, A Deadly Silence: The Ordeal of Cheryl Pierson: A Case of Incest and Murder (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988). This account of father-daughter incest contains all the elements familiar to those dealing with these cases. From the believers(the arresting officer) to the non- believers(Cheryl's paternal grandmother), the ambiguous feelings of society can be read on the back book flap: "Cheryl Pierson *claims* to have been sexually abused by her father since she was eleven years old -..." Emphasis added.

A third part of the answer can be found in the nature of child sexual abuse itself. The memory of the abuse is often blocked out by the children who are sexually abused. The memories resurface during a 'repeat performance' of an abusive situation, during sexual situations, or sometimes when the mind feels secure enough to let the memories out. Victims consistently and continuously blame themselves for the abuse as only children can.⁷ Consequently, when kept secret, any manifestation of the problem may only surface in adolescence and is often exhibited by antisocial behaviours such as acting-out, rebelliousness, self-destructive behaviour, self-mutilation, alcohol and drug use, early excessive and compulsive sexuality, prostitution, passivity and suicide. Until recently, little consideration was given to the idea that this kind of behaviour might be directly related to past sexual abuse by adult caretakers - even when known and remembered by the victim.⁸

⁷Until recently the most available model is that of the impact of divorce on children. Even when explained to children of divorcing parents that it is not their fault, they often still blame themselves for the divorce. Linda Bird Francke, Growing up Divorced (New York: Linden Press/Simon & Shuster, 1983). For analyses of the problem as one of abuse of power against women and children, see Judith Herman, Father-Daughter Incest (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), Diana E. H. Russell, The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women (New York: Basic Books, 1986), Brownmiller, Against Our Will, Armstrong, "Cradle".

⁸Rather, these behaviours were seen as a maladjustment of the teenager or adult to societal living for which they were themselves directly and solely responsible. In 1984, C. Henry Kempe and Ruth Kempe stated that their work on child sexual abuse now led them to believe that they had underestimated the impact of sexual abuse on the children whom they had treated over the years. They now feel that in many instances sexual abuse was the primary and often sole contributing factor in the negative dysfunctional behavior apparent

This chapter will be primarily focused on the impact of father-daughter sexual assault on the daughter. Since the truly serious nature of child sexual abuse and the overwhelming prevalence of this form of child abuse are issues which have been addressed only in the last decade, differences of opinions and theoretical discussions over most of the related issues from the causes of father-daughter incest to the goals of recovery, the definition and constitution of sexual abuse of children still arise.⁹ Betrayal of trust is a major issue in cases of sexual assault. Since father-daughter incest is one of the closest relationships in which sexual abuse occurs, it has a lasting and devastating impact.¹⁰ The following discussion will therefore be based on the growing consensus of the literature. Theoretical issues concerned with the definition of incest and child sexual abuse and prevalence issues will be discussed. A profile of the incestuous family, and in particular the father, but excluding the victim, will situate the environmental context for an incest survivor and the risk factors for abuse. This will be followed by an in-depth discussion of long-term impact of incest on the daughter, and the factors affecting impact. An analysis of the

in the children whom they had treated. The Common Secret, pp. 3-7. See also Roland Summit, "Beyond Belief".

⁹R. Summit and J. Kryso, "Sexual Abuse of Children: A Clinical Spectrum" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 48(1979), pp. 237-51.

¹⁰For example, a daughter is less likely to tell of the abuse if it is her father. Beverly Gomes-Schwartz, Jonathan M. Horowitz and Albert P. Cardelli, Child Sexual Abuse: The Initial Effects Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1990), p. 68.

needs of the therapeutic process if an optimum recovery from father-daughter incest is to be achieved will be left for Chapter six, "Impediments to Recovery."

Theoretical Issues

a) Definition

Definitions of child sexual abuse are used to determine if there is cause for legal action to be taken, or whether the result of the sexual abuse has been detrimental. Definition also plays a role in determining the prevalence of the problem.¹¹ Definitions can be used to encompass terms such as overt or covert incest.¹² Until recently 'incest' has been a term most frequently associated with anthropological and sociological research to determine, for example, kinship structures.¹³ The most general understanding and definition used has reflected this emphasis on the blood

¹¹See 'Prevalence', pp. 28-32 below.

¹²Judith Herman coined the use of these terms to differentiate between the obvious touching, fondling, voyeurism, and intercourse that constitute sexual abuse and the 'dating behaviour' of some fathers towards their daughters. This dating behaviour she termed covert incest, since it was the most difficult for its victims to determine had occurred and to articulate its impact. She argued, based on her data, that this type of behaviour on the part of fathers could be at times as damaging in its long-term impact on the daughter's self-esteem as actual physical contact. Father-Daughter, pp. 109-25.

¹³W. Arens, The Original Sin: Incest and Its Meaning (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Shepher, Incest.

relationship between perpetrator and victim.¹⁴

The definition which underlines the issue of father-daughter incest, as it is understood in this thesis is one taken from Secret Survivors by E. Sue Blume and focusses on the consequences of sexual assault for the victim.

Incest can be seen as the imposition of sexually inappropriate acts, or acts with sexual overtones, by - or any use of a minor child to meet the sexual or sexual/emotional needs of - one or more persons who derive authority through ongoing emotional bonding with that child.¹⁵

This definition has the advantage of being inclusive. It incorporates the impact of sexual assault, from dating behaviour on the part of the father to rape. As an explanatory system, this definition has broad application and can be used to describe the impact of the relationship between siblings, the biological father or stepfather, and can even be used to define the relationship between a Roman Catholic priest and one of his child parishioners.

b) Prevalence

A psychiatrist noted that he had been taught that 'real'

¹⁴A look at the early work of Christopher Bagley and his present position on incest illustrates this point effectively. Christopher Bagley, "Incest Behaviour and Incest Taboo" Social Problems (1969), pp. 505-19, "Mental Health and the In-Family Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents" in B. Schlesinger, ed., Sexual Abuse of Children in the 1980's (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 30-50, and Christopher Bagley and Kathleen King, Child Sexual Abuse: The Search for Healing (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1990).

¹⁵Blume, Secret Survivors, p. 4.

incest was rare, occurring in about one case in a million. After a number of years of practice, he figured that if this was correct, he had every 'real' incest victim in the United States in his practice.¹⁶ One study has indicated a figure as high as two-thirds of the female population in that group had experienced some form of sexual molestation in their lives before the age of eighteen.¹⁷ The Badgley Report suggested that in Canada one in two females and one in three males had experienced some form of sexual molestation in their lives before the age of eighteen, based on its analysis of over 10,000 persons.¹⁸ With figures like these after a decade of research, we are looking at an experience which is part of the life story of many people in our society.¹⁹

¹⁶J. Woodbury, and E. Schwartz, The Silent Shame: A Case History of Incest (New York: New American Library, 1971), p. v.

¹⁷Diana Russell, "The incidence and prevalence of intrafamilial and extrafamilial sexual abuse of female children" Child Abuse & Neglect 7(1983), pp. 133-46.

¹⁸R. Badgley, H. Allard, N. McCormick, P. Proudfoot, D. Fortin, D. Ogilvie, Q. Rae-Grant, P. Gellinas, L. Pepin, and S. Sutherland, Sexual Offenses against Children, Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children and Youth, two volumes and summary (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1984), vol. 1, p. 193. Cf. J. Lowman, M. A. Jackson, T. S. Palys and S. Gavigan, eds, Regulating Sex: An Anthology of Commentaries on the Findings and Recommendations of the Badgley and Fraser Reports (Burnaby B.C.: School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University, 1986).

¹⁹Russell, Secret Trauma, Herman, Father-Daughter, Florence Rush, The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1980), Armstrong, "Cradle". Furthermore, some of these statistics, or ones similar to them, had already been reported in the infamous Kinsey Report. Kinsey's data were not really paid attention to because the way in which they were reported in part indicated that the premature sexualization had caused no problem for those who had had these early sexual experiences.

Yet there are still problems with determining the actual statistics for the sexual abuse of children.²⁰ The reasons for this are many.

1. Different definitions of incest and sexual abuse mean that the studies with regards to prevalence come up with different numbers. For example, if sexual abuse is restricted to only intercourse, sodomy and oral sex, the numbers will be much smaller than if a broader definition such as the one used above which focuses on impact and therefore can include touching and flashing, for example, is used.

2. Prevalence findings will also vary depending on the content and organization of the study. A study such as Diana Russell's where the interviewers were extensively trained and follow-up procedures were instituted will come up with much larger numbers than will a simple "were you ever sexually assaulted as a child?"²¹

3. The nature of the psychological techniques used to survive the abuse means that memories of sexual assault are often blocked, thus giving false negatives by some actual survivors. Often many people do not consider what happened to them as 'assault'.

4. Prevalence among males is even more questionable at this point because of their reluctance to admit such a non-masculine event. In a society where masculinity is equated with power, the powerlessness and helplessness of the child sexual assault victim

²⁰Gail E. Wyatt and S. D. Peters, "Methodological Considerations in Research in the Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse" Child Abuse & Neglect 10(1986), pp. 231-40.

²¹Russell, The Secret Trauma, pp. 19-55.

is difficult for males to assimilate. Thus, receiving false negatives from those questioned can be considered a high probability.

5. Shame and distrust of the interviewer and her or his motives are also motives for a negative reply.

6. Prevalence statistics from therapists have also been a problem. Many therapists did not ask the right questions. The presenting symptoms of a child sexual abuse survivor are often seemingly unrelated to sexual abuse. These women and men come into therapy for alcoholism, marriage failures, drug addiction, and depression. It is now being more readily understood that these symptoms can mask early sexual abuse and it must be considered as a serious possibility for clients presenting these symptoms.²²

In the final analysis, the accepted numbers at the present time indicate that one in four females and one in ten males are victims of serious sexual assault before the age of eighteen. The majority of the victims knew their assailants, and the misuse of authority inherent in age differences and family relationships is marked.²³ One finding consistent with the data is that daughters are at greater risk from stepfathers or other males in the family

²²Shelley Barlas Nagel, "Addictive Behaviors: Problems in Treatment with Borderline Patients" in James F. Masterson, and Ralph Klein, eds, Psychotherapy of the Disorders of the Self: The Masterson Approach (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Publishers, 1989), pp. 401-4. John Briere and Marsha Runtz, "Post Sexual Abuse Trauma" in Wyatt and Powell, eds, Lasting Effects, p. 96. Blume, Secret Survivors.

²³Bagley and King, Child Sexual Abuse, pp. 56-77.

than from their biological fathers.²⁴ However, the situation among Christian families appears, at this time, to be just the opposite.²⁵ The impact of being sexually assaulted as a child will vary with each individual, with the closeness of the relationship, with the age of occurrence, and with the number of assaults (either with one perpetrator or multiple perpetrators) whether it is coupled with other forms of physical abuse - but the reality of its existence as a strong thread in western society cannot be denied.

Structure of the Incest Family

Caution must be exercised in thinking that there is a complete understanding of the dynamics of the incest family. The profile of the high risk child and high risk family may as yet be inadequate to fully understand the dynamics of incest. Incest may be prevalent in families for whom no dysfunctional characteristics may be determined on the surface. Socioeconomic strata do not seem to be related to the incidence of abuse, although studies originally done with data collected from the social service organizations seemed to indicate that the poorer populations had larger incidence. This has now been understood to be a factor caused by the fact that poorer members of society are often under the scrutiny by social service agencies, while people with more

²⁴Russell, Secret Trauma, pp. 256-69. Bagley and King, Child Sexual Abuse, p. 75.

²⁵See chapter three for prevalence of child sexual abuse in Christian families.

education and more income have access to alternate resources to keep the abuse from the public eye.²⁶

However, one thing that is noted in the literature and by clinicians is the psychological isolation of incest families who perceive the outside world as threatening. Given the shock that often attends the disclosure of father-daughter incest and the description of the offender proffered by those that know him, there is probably a good basis for the claim that sexual assault in the family is more a function of society's male-female structure than any individual pathology by the male.²⁷

One of the problems faced in assessing incest families is the fact that in one way the sexual relationship between father and daughter(s) is functioning to maintain family equilibrium. Underlying this is the fact that in these families the male is the main, and often sole, income earner. These families also accept the idea that the father is the authority figure in the family and that it is the mother's role to keep the father happy and the family together at all costs even at the price of her children's lives.²⁸

²⁶Gomes-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardarelli, Child Sexual Abuse, p. 65.

²⁷David Finkelhor, et al, A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse (London: SAGE Publications, 1986). Jean Renvoise, Incest: A Family Pattern (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 89-96 on incest as a function of paedophilia or dysfunctioning families. Herman, Father-Daughter, pp. 202-218, Russell, Secret Trauma, pp. 391-95.

²⁸Often one reads that the way to solve this problem is to realign the power balance in the family. The therapeutic goals depend on how the family dynamics are interpreted. If, for example, the interpretation is that the father 'gets no respect'

The abusive father

At least in external appearances, the majority of fathers who sexually abuse their daughters are relatively normal men.²⁹ They come from all walks of life, are churchgoers, good workers, often involved in the community, and are family men. However, a closer look at the profile of the incest offender reveals that these men have a destructive impact on the entire family, women and children, sexually abused or not, since they assert power and control within the one sphere - the home - where they have it.³⁰ Issues of insecurity and need for control are large components of these men's psychological makeup.³¹ James Poling states that these men have an

and therefore has had to seek his 'sexual rights' in an inappropriate fashion, then the focus is on placing power in his hands and teaching him how to be a more assertive person - a better, benign dictator. (This is similar to the approach of 'Tough Love' advocates who insist that children have 'gone bad' because the parents did not assert their power.) Another method focuses on creating a positive mother and daughter alliance and constructing a cohesive unit where power and trust can develop and serve as a barrier to the inappropriate behaviour of the father. This is coupled with separate therapy for the father. Part of the differences in therapeutic goals often depends on whether the sexual assault of the daughter is interpreted as a problem of abuse of sexuality or one of abuse of power.

²⁹S. K. Weinberg, Incest Behavior (New York: Citadel Press, 1955).

³⁰David T. Ballard, et al, "A Comparative Profile of the Incest Perpetrator: *Background Characteristics, Abuse History, and Use of Social Skills*" in Anne L. Horton, Barry L. Johnson, Lynn M. Roundy, and Doran Williams, eds, The Incest Perpetrator: A Family Member No One Wants to Treat (London: SAGE Publications 1990), pp. 49-55.

³¹A. Nicholas Groth, "The Incest Offender" in S. Sgroi, ed., Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982), pp. 215-40, A. Nicholas Groth and H. Jean Birnbaum, Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender (New

extremely fragmented sense of self that is constantly in danger of collapsing.³² They are angry, depressed men who are incapable of defining much less meeting their emotional needs.³³ They were often abused as children.³⁴ They have very poor relationship skills and are in great need of limit-setting.

They have strong patriarchal feelings about how the world should run and feel that there are distinct roles for the male and female. They are often compliant with authority figures and excessively concerned about what other people think of them. They exhibit a lack of trust and do not believe that anyone will understand or sympathize with them. They often also have problems with close peer-level relationships.

Fathers who commit incest will deny that anything has occurred, sometimes despite overwhelming evidence. They will call the daughter all sorts of names and point to her behaviour (which in the teen years will often be rebellious in terms of disobedience, poor school performance, indiscriminate sexual behaviour - all indicators of the sexual abuse) as proof that she

York: Plenum Press, 1979).

³²James N. Poling, "Issues in the Psychotherapy of Child Molesters" Journal of Pastoral Care 8:1(Spring 1989), pp. 25-32.

³³Kee MacFarlane, "Child Sexual Abuse Allegations in Divorce Proceedings" in Kee MacFarlane and Jill Waterman, eds, Sexual Abuse of Young Children: Evaluation and Treatment (New York: The Guilford Press, 1986), pp. 134-7.

³⁴This is only one of many questions that is need of further research. While it seems that many abusers were abused children, it is also true that certain studies have suggested that this is not always the case. David Finkelhor, Child Sexual Abuse.

is not to be trusted. Furthermore, if they do admit that some form of sexual relationship had occurred, they will hold the daughter responsible for her behaviour and for their sexual assault. In his relationship with his daughter, an abusive father is unable to empathize with her and has inappropriate age expectations from her. There is a form of role reversal apparent in the relationship with the daughter. He expects her to take over some form of mothering role and give him the acceptance and love which was denied to him as a child. The role is sexualized as he expects her to take over the role of wife in bed.

More needs to be known, particularly about why some men react to stressful situations by sexually assaulting their children - a situation which is often the case with father-daughter incest. Groth's typology of abusers is based on the work he did with sexual offenders in prisons and is still relevant to the discussion.³⁵ However his rigid classification of regressed offenders (those who have an apparently primary sexual interest in adults and turn to children for sexual gratification in times of stress) and fixated offenders (those whose primary sexual interest is in children) is now open to question as more studies are being done and more incest perpetrators are being, for the most part, forced into treatment.³⁶

³⁵Poling, Abuse of Power, Finkelhor, Child Sexual Abuse, Bagley and King, Child Sexual Abuse.

³⁶The assumption was that incestuous fathers, and sometimes stepfathers, did not commit sexual offenses against children outside their immediate family. However, recent studies are showing that this is not the case. Some of them are abusing other children outside the home concurrent with the abuse in the home. See G. Abel, J. Becker, J. Cunningham-Rathner, M. Mittelman and J.

Molesters of children are one of the most difficult groups of those who deviate from acceptable social norms to get to accept responsibility for their behaviour, and the need for change - much less undergo the necessary behavioural shifts in thinking and action.

The mother

The scapegoating of mothers has always been a part of the pattern for determining responsibility when children 'go wrong' or when there are problems in the family.³⁷ It would appear that this is no less, and maybe even more so in cases of father-daughter incest.³⁸ Questions like, "where was the mother?" "didn't she know?" "why didn't she stop it?" are met with answers such as "she was frigid and unresponsive to her husband's needs," "she set her child up to take her place," "she was a working mother." She is often called the passive or complicitous partner in the sexual abuse. She is diagnosed as pathological, unemotional, too

L.Rouleau, "Multiple Paraphiliac Diagnoses Among Sex Offenders" Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law 16(1988), pp. 153-68, where 49% of the fathers abused children outside the home as well as inside.

³⁷Paula Caplan and Ian McCorquodale, "Mother-blaming in Major Clinical Journals" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 55(1985), pp. 345-53, and "The Scapegoating of Mothers: A Call for Change" op. cit., pp. 610-13. Cf. Paula J. Caplan, The Myth of Women's Masochism (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985).

³⁸Gomes-Schwartz, Child Sexual Abuse, pp. 109-113, Bagley and King, Child Sexual Abuse, pp. 165-68, Louise Armstrong, The Home Front: Notes From the Family War Zone (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1983), p. 202.

emotional.³⁹ This focus on the mother often looks like an ongoing attempt to assess blame in order to release the fathers of responsibility for sexual assaults on their daughters. The hidden assumption often seems to be that if it can only be determined what the mothers and/or daughters did wrong in the relationship, then victimization by the fathers will stop.⁴⁰

The role of the mother is problematic and often they do not have very good relationships with their daughters. In fact, one of the primary tools that the therapeutic program of Parents United uses is the reestablishment of the mother-daughter bond.⁴¹ Often the mothers themselves were victims of sexual assault or physical assault in the home when they were children. Given the dynamics of sexual assault, many things follow when determining the mother's ability to protect her child.⁴² If they had been sexually assaulted, their poor self-image would hamper them in recognizing what was happening to their daughters. It also makes it difficult for them initially to respond in a positive and supportive manner

³⁹Karin Meiselman, Incest: A Psychological Study of Causes and Effects with Treatment Recommendations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978), pp. 111-30, Herman, Father-Daughter, Suzanne M. Sgroi and Natalie T. Dana, "Individual and Group Treatment of Mothers of Incest Victims" in Sgroi, Handbook, pp. 191-214.

⁴⁰Sandra Butler, Conspiracy of Silence: The Trauma of Incest (San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1985).

⁴¹Henry Giarretto, "The Treatment of Father Daughter Incest: A Psychosocial Approach" Children Today (July-August 1976), pp. 2-5, 34 and "A Comprehensive Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program" Child Abuse & Neglect 6(1982), pp. 263-78.

⁴²Beverly Gomes-Schwartz, et al, "The Myth of the Mother as "Accomplice" to Child Sexual Abuse" in Gomez-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardarelli, Child Sexual Abuse, pp. 109-31.

when the incest is disclosed.⁴³

Non-sexually assaulted siblings in the family

The impact on the non-sexually assaulted children in the family where father-daughter incest takes place is an issue still being debated. One study in Salt Lake City found that there were no differences between sexually assaulted and non-sexually assaulted sisters in terms of having poor self-esteem.⁴⁴ Siblings often see the victim as their father's favourite.⁴⁵ Since it is becoming axiomatic that any family where there is father-daughter incest is not a place where positive family relationships occur, it is not surprising to find that siblings in these families also have difficulties with interpersonal and societal relationships.

It is evident that the families where sexual assault of children occurs are not functioning as positive growth environments for the children in them. Families with a strong patriarchal, authoritarian mode of relating and divorced families with a new male parent figure are at risk.⁴⁶ The socially isolated family is at risk as is the home with an absent or ill maternal figure.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴S. B. Dipietro, "The Effects of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse on the Adjustment and Attitudes of Adolescents" Violence and Victims 2:1(1987), pp. 59-78. See next chapter, pp. 56-7.

⁴⁵Meiselman, Incest.

⁴⁶Meiselman, Incest, Herman, Father-Daughter, Russell, Secret Trauma.

The Sexually Abused Daughter⁴⁷

Until recently, the literature of father-daughter incest has managed to hold the daughter responsible for some, if not all, of the sexual assault. Over the last century impetus for this tendency to blame women for sexual assault perpetrated upon them received an unparalleled boost from Sigmund Freud. By reneging on his earlier position that women had been sexually assaulted when they were children and deciding that female children had the desire for sexual relationships with their fathers, and what he was hearing from the therapy couch were fantasies based on unfulfilled sexual longings for the father, he did irreparable damage to generations of women, on a cultural level as well as on a

⁴⁷The following section is focussed on the long-term impact of sexual assault. It is hoped that as the problem is confronted, the ravages of undisclosed sexual assault will be lessened. The short term impact of the abuse is often associated with sleeplessness, bedwetting, introversion, lack of concentration, abrupt change in behaviour, clinging, change in school behaviour or performance, either better or worse, obsessions and nightmares. One of the important factors in the recovery process is the reaction of the other significant adults to the disclosure of assaults. If the child is believed immediately, then there is at least one person whom the child can trust. The impact of the sexual assaults by the father is greatly diminished if there was parental support for the child from the non-offending parent at the time of disclosure. If the disclosure of the sexual assault is delayed, often into adulthood, the beginning of a support system is delayed and the psychosocial impact is far greater. Therapy differs if the abuse is caught early enough. It appears that therapeutic intervention when there is early disclosure and a supportive system lessens the impact of the sexual assault. Since there are as yet no longitudinal studies, it is too early to tell if the devastating long-term impact of incest told in story after story of adult survivors of father-daughter incest will be circumvented by early intervention. Gomes-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardelli, Child Sexual Abuse, pp. 132-52.

psychological level.⁴⁸ Until recently the literature has talked of seductive daughters, never accepting that seductive behaviour in an incest victim was a learned behavioural response. There are numerous stories of men who were absolved of their abuse because the daughters, some preschool age, have led them on.⁴⁹ The daughters tended to be passive and often did not cause problems until they wanted to be free of their fathers. If they were sexually active outside the home, this was counted against them, although they were behaving in the best way they knew how to attract male attention.

Many factors affect the negative impact of sexual abuse by a father on his daughter.⁵⁰ For example, the earlier the age at

⁴⁸Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria" in J. M. Masson, Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984(original date, 1896)), 76. Appendix B, p. 251-82. Today, this paper could be read before a group of professional who work with adult survivors and there would only be murmurs of assent. Freud stated that "the symptoms of hysteria ... are determined by certain experiences of the patient's which have operated in a traumatic fashion and which are being reproduced in his(sic) psychical life in the form of mnemonic symbols." He called these incidents rape, abuse, seduction, attack, assault, aggression and trauma. He named the perpetrators as father, uncles and brothers. For further discussion of this issue see, Masson, above, Herman, Father-Daughter, Rush, Best Kept Secret, and Florence Rush, "Sexual Abuse of Children, A Feminist Point of View" in Noreen Consul and Cassandra Wilson, eds., Rape: the First Sourcebook for Women (New York: New American Library, 1974), Marianne Krüll, Freud and His Father, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1986(1979)).

⁴⁹Elizabeth Ward, Father-Daughter Rape (London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1984).

⁵⁰The chart in Gomes-Schwartz, Child Sexual Abuse, p. 27, is very helpful in putting into condensed form the variables used to predict the impact of sexual abuse.

which assault began and the longer the assault goes on, the more damage the impact will have on the daughter. In all child sexual assault cases, the relationship of the person who committed assaults to the victim is crucial. The closer the relationship, the greater the negative impact. This is because the closer the relationship, the less likely it is that the victim will tell; the greater the betrayal of trust. It also means that the abuse can last for a much longer time.⁵¹ The age of the perpetrator⁵² and the number of different perpetrators also has an impact on the effect of the assault. Another factor which plays a role in the impact is whether or not physical violence was part of the attack. It was earlier thought that the parent who sexually assaulted a child was less likely to apply physical violence. This idea is being challenged as more information is gathered.⁵³ Another factor is the method that was used to get the daughter to comply with the sexual wishes. The more violent the method, the more traumatic the experience, since the more violent methods of coercion tend to be used on older children to force intercourse. Manipulation and emotional coercion are all that is needed with younger daughters who would be unlikely to question their fathers.

Traumatic experiences may cause specific forms of development

⁵¹Gomes-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardelli, Child Sexual Abuse, p. 66-69, Bagley and King, Child Sexual Abuse.

⁵²Diana E. H. Russell, et al, "The Long-term Effects of Incestuous Abuse: A Comparison of Afro-American and White American Victims" in Wyatt and Powell, Lasting Effects, p. 132-33.

⁵³For example, Gomes-Schwartz, Child Sexual Abuse, p. 66.

to be stopped at the point of trauma. Other forms of development, for example, intellectual development, may be heightened as a way of compensating for other losses.⁵⁴ The length and the degree of the abuse, the context and content of the abuse, the relationship to abuser and the age of abuser have all been cited as factors which effect the level of the trauma experience and, consequently, will determine the extent of the behavioural repercussions.

One important factor in processing of a traumatic event is how that person processes the event at the time. The daughter will be less affected if she can perceive the event correctly, i.e. that it was abusive and not her fault, if she translates that perception into a clear meaning, relates the meaning to her enduring attitude, decides to take appropriate action, i.e. tell of the abuse right away, and can revise her memories, attitudes and belief systems to fit a new developmental line made necessary by the traumatic event. When she cannot do this, for example, because she is too young, the event is stored into memory and the thoughts, feelings, and memories associated with the trauma are always there pushing to be released in order to form some type of resolution. When they cannot be resolved, they are denied or actively dismissed.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Alice Miller, The Drama of the Gifted Child: How Narcissistic Parents Form and Deform The Emotional Lives of Their Talented Children, trans. Ruth Ward (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

⁵⁵M. J. Horowitz, Stress Response Syndromes (New York: Jason Aronson, 1976), Mary Ann Donaldson and Russell Gardner, Jr., "Diagnosis and Treatment of Traumatic Stress Among Women After Childhood Incest" in Charles R. Figley, ed., Trauma and its Wake: The Study and Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985), pp. 356-77.

However, they return and there are socio-psychological repercussions. Those repercussions are listed under long-term impact of assault. They include depression, low self-esteem, guilt, promiscuity, prostitution,⁵⁶ self hatred, substance abuse, self-mutilation and suicide, multiple personality disorders,⁵⁷ eating disorders, inability to form lasting and non-abusive adult relationships, intrusive flashbacks and a continuing search for meaning (the "why me" questions). The material from the child sexual abuse literature shows that the long term impact on adult women who were sexually assaulted as children is far less socially unacceptable or deviant.⁵⁸ Depression, lack of self-esteem,

⁵⁶Some of the victims of child sexual abuse become prostitutes or child molesters. These populations have an extremely high rate of child sexual abuse in their backgrounds. Groth, Men Who Rape, Mimi Silbert and A. Piven, "Child Sexual Abuse as an Antecedent to Prostitution" Child Abuse and Neglect 5(1981), pp. 407-11.

⁵⁷A response such as the development of multiple personality disorders is more particularized and, in the long term, a more destructive form of coping mechanism which very young children develop in order to survive extended sexual and violent physical abuse. Margo Rivera, Multiple Personality: an outcome of child abuse (Toronto: Education/Dissociation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1991). One of the more famous cases of multiple personality disorder was told by Flora Rheta Schreiber in Sibyl (New York: Warner Books, 1973). This book told a wrenching story of sexual and physical violence with distinct religious overtones. There was a singular lack of response from those in the community like Sibyl's doctor who were aware that there was something terribly wrong.

⁵⁸Finkelhor, Child Sexual Abuse, Herman, Father-Daughter, Russell, Secret Trauma, Louise Armstrong, Kiss Daddy Goodnight (New York: Pocket Books, 1978), Forward and Buck, Betrayal of Innocence, Summit, "Beyond Belief", Roland Summit, "The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome" International Journal of Child Abuse & Neglect 7(1983), pp. 177-93 and Roland Summit and J. Kryso, "Sexual Abuse of Children: A Clinical Spectrum" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 48(1978), pp. 237-51.

suicide attempts, and recurrent victimization are some of the long-term responses victims.⁵⁹ The development of neuroses and even psychoses are other ways in which the victim learns to cope with the abuse perpetrated upon them depending on the age at which the abuse began. Dissociation, lack of affect, lack of empathy are all associated with victims of child abuse. Research also shows that victims of father-daughter incest are much harder on themselves than they should be since their perceptions of their coping abilities are skewed.⁶⁰ Sexual abuse, if unresolved, causes the kind of psychic damage that requires the creation of some forms of coping mechanisms throughout the life of the victim.⁶¹ At each stage of development, the trauma will be reevaluated: consciously by those who remember; in a more convoluted fashion by those who have blocked the abuse. For many victims, incest starts a life-long quest for answers of why she was abused in this manner.⁶² It is not easy to understand that the suffering that she has undergone was unrelated to her behaviour, personality, existence. It can be said that this abuse is a case of 'being in the wrong place at the wrong time', i.e. being born into the wrong family, but this is

⁵⁹Sgroi, Handbook, Herman, Father-Daughter, Russell, Secret Trauma.

⁶⁰Herman, Father-Daughter, pp. 106-9.

⁶¹Summit, "Abuse Accommodation Syndrome", C. Adams-Tucker, "Defence Mechanisms Used by Sexually Abused Children" Children Today (January-February 1985), pp. 9-12, 34. R. L. Silver, C. Boon, and M. H. Stones, "Searching for Meaning in Misfortune: Making Sense of Incest" Journal of Social Issues 39:2(1983), pp. 81-102.

⁶²Silver, Boon, and Stones, "Searching for Meaning".

hard to accept when one constantly tries to put meaning into a relationship of cause and effect. The eventual impact on the victim when the abuse continues for a long time is that she will react to the world as if there were absolutely no place for trust in anyone or anything. Any attempt to place a form of order on the chaos is doomed before it is begun. Their reaction to any authority figure can be rebellious or totally submissive. Any relationship that has the potential to be a caring and loving one is destroyed before it can start since the incest victim cannot believe that any relationship will last.

Summary

Some of what has been discussed above that highlights the problems of incest survivors can also relate to victims of other forms of adult abuse on children, such as physical abuse and alcoholism. Guilt, self-blame and a sense of worthlessness pervade these children and the adults they become and all the behavioural responses discussed above are symptomatic of that lack of a sense of worth. There is an almost chicken/egg situation inherent in the problem of the impact of childhood sexual assault if it is left untreated. Premature sexualization leads to promiscuity and/or frigidity and passive women who are unable to assert themselves and who then become revictimized. Since they cannot protect themselves, they are incapable of truly protecting their children, and this leaves their children at high risk for also being sexually

abused. They are the victims of "toxic parenting" to use Susan Forward's phrase, and they are in danger of becoming toxic parents.⁶³

This chapter has indicated the different psychosocial aspects of the life of a victim of father-daughter sexual assault. The therapeutic aspects of the recovery process will be discussed in the final chapter, "Christianity and Impediments to Recovery." The next two chapters are a review of different aspects of incest and Christianity. The next chapter is a review of some of the literature which discusses religious issues in relation to Christianity and incest. The fourth chapter contains a survey of relevant biblical material and an analysis from tradition concerning religious events surrounding the life of a child sexual assault victim.

⁶³S. Forward with C. Buck, Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life (New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANITY?

Child Sexual Assault and Christianity in the Secondary Literature

"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Matthew 18:3-6 RSV¹

We're not just a churchgoing family, we have very strong faith and belief and conviction. So for this to come out was really a shock. I could not believe what my children were telling me. It was like watching some wild horror movie. I felt like I wasn't just in the valley, I was down in the pit.²

Introduction

Since the field of research concerned with the sexual abuse of children is itself so new, it is not surprising to find that there is little in the way of previous work which discusses the problem of child sexual abuse within the parameters of religious

¹cf. Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2.

²Judith L. Herman, Father-Daughter Incest (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 130.

structures.³ Of the few works available, most are still involved in outlining and explaining the problem and offering certain broad suggestions for help. This is surprising since Christian beliefs are often assumed to give clear answers to children's questions. Little is being written in the mainstream about the impact of the abuse on the formation of religious belief and less about the impact of religious beliefs and how they affect the way in which children experience and cope with their abuse, i.e. what answers they find to their questions of meaning.

The initial question people often ask is "What has Christianity got to do with the continuing problem of child sexual abuse?" It is often implied that Christianity must only be part of the solution - used to stop the horror by making everyone 'real' Christians or because it has the answers for suffering victims and abusers.⁴ Despite the fact that priests and other clergy have been convicted of the sexual abuse of children, despite the other cases which involve religious Christian families, despite evidence that this social problem occurs in all socioeconomic and cultural strata, people want to believe one prevailing myth: that it doesn't happen within a religious context, and if it happens within Christian structures it is because of the intrusion of the

³Noted by Grant Martin, Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse (Waco, Texas: Word Book Publisher, 1987), p. 235. David Peters, A Betrayal of Innocence: What Everyone Should Know About Child Sexual Abuse (Waco: Texas: Word Book Publisher, 1986).

⁴Maxine Hancock and Karen Mains, "The Incest Iceberg: Deep Waters for the Church", Faith Today: Canada's Evangelical Newsfeature Magazine (Nov/Dec 1986), pp. 22-28.

'secular' world. The problem is seen as a "secular" one and great emphasis is placed on "dysfunctional families" in both the secular and religious literatures.⁵

Religious factors are seldom placed into discussions of the problem. Questions concerning religious beliefs and religious structure of their family life, even something as simple as what religion they are, are seldom asked or related in surveys. Therefore specific statistical data concerning the religious weltanschauung of the abused do not exist in any form that would be meaningful for those who demand "statistical proof" for the existence of either a problem or its impact. When religious data is available, it is often incomplete, not analyzed, or is incidental to some larger question.

Most works on child sexual abuse in the Christian material are descriptive in nature. They describe the problem as devastating and a major problem for the 'body of Christ'.⁶ They discuss the prevalence issues, the problem as it has been manifested in some case studies, how these cases were handled and then describe some of the methods to be used in counselling the victims and the

⁵Church Council on Justice and Corrections, "Brief to the Minister of Justice Regarding Badgley Report on Sexual Offenses Against Children", unpublished (Ottawa: November 1985), Edward Hastings, Child Abuse: Viewing it as a National Problem and the Church as a Resource, PhD dissertation (Claremont CA: Claremont School of Theology, June 1975). This is also one of the focal points of secular analysis and theory of incest. Kathy Culpepper, Social Work and Father-Daughter Incest, M.S.W. Independent Inquiry, School of Social Work (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1987), 93pp.

⁶Peters, Betrayal of Innocence, p. 13, cf. Martin, Counseling, p. 15

perpetrators. There is very little material that discusses the problems of child sexual abuse in the religious environment and what to do about it.

Different media will be utilized in order to analyze the Christian religious factor and its role in child sexual abuse. The material in this area is varied and includes monographs, pamphlets, newspaper articles, media transcripts and academic writing. My review and analysis will be divided into several parts, and will only be looking at places where there are significant differences from the analysis of the psychological profile of the incest family and impact of the incest victim given in the previous chapter. It will discuss other types of child sexual abuse and family violence issues as they have a bearing on the issues discussed since there is minimal data available. The first section will discuss the problems in Christianity and psychology as they relate to determining the relationship of Christianity to child sexual abuse. The second will discuss the prevalence of child sexual abuse within Christian environments. The third section will look at the general profile of the Christian family and then the specifics of the father, mother and daughter in a Christian incest family. The purpose of this will be to determine if there are any relevant specific areas found only in Christian discussions of the subject or that the secular literature feels is singular to Christian families.

The fourth section will look at what are seen as the causes of incest in the Christian family that are peculiar to it or that

distinguishes a particular author's interpretation from the data given about father-daughter incest in the previous chapter. The fifth section will look at whether the writers discuss the impact of incest on the religious value system of the abused and her family and, alternately, the impact of the religious value system on the causes and resolution of the incest. The last section will look at how these authors would solve the problem of incest within Christian environments.

Christianity and Psychology

There has always been a tension between psychology and psychoanalysis, on the one hand, and religion, on the other.⁷ Religion has been called an illusion, an opiate, a scourge.⁸ The main argument from the secular world seems to revolve around the question of whether religion - in most cases in western material, Christianity - is good for people or is bad for people. The major complaint from the Christian world seems to be that the views of

⁷David Wulff, "Psychological Approaches" in F. Whaling, ed., Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion, Vol. 2, The social sciences (New York: Mouton, 1985), 21-88, David Wulff, Psychology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Views (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), Paul Pruyser, A Dynamic Psychology of Religion (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers 1968) and C. David Batson, "An Agenda Item for Psychology of Religion: Getting respect" Journal of Psychology and Christianity 5:2(1986), pp. 6-11.

⁸Wendell W. Watters. "A Psychiatrist's Assessment of Christian Doctrine" Humanist in Canada 20:4(1987/88), pp. 7-10. See also Thomas Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness (New York: A Delta Book, 1967(1961)).

the secular segment of society are reductionist. This then sometimes leads to a call for separation of religious questions or faith issues from the psychological purview⁹ - a point many psychologists seem more than willing to agree to.

It is possible to read case study after case study, book after book in the field of psychology without reading a word about religion, even though most people adhere to some form of religious belief system. The few that do mention religion do so in a way that either makes it seem like an afterthought or creates such a pathological picture of religious belief that it alienates those in both the religious and secular sphere, though obviously for very different reasons.¹⁰ It would be almost fair to say that unless the religious content of a patient's therapy is extremely pathological in its content, like that of Daniel Shreber,¹¹ it is not worth mentioning.

This problem is continued in the works on child sexual abuse. The problem here is even more crucial since it involves not just

⁹James W. Jones, Contemporary Psychoanalysis & Religion: Transference and Transcendence (New Haven: Yale University press, 1991).

¹⁰Paul Pruyser, A Dynamic Psychology of Religion (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1968).

¹¹Sigmund Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" (1911) in Three Case Histories (New York: Collier Books, 1963). M. Schatzman, Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family (New York: Random House, 1973). Cf. Philip Greven, Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991) and James Poling, The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), pp. 75-92.

adult survivors but children in crisis.¹² There are only minor and fleeting references to the religious background of offenders, victims and their families in the literature on child sexual abuse. Consequently, there is almost no developed analysis of the specific characteristics of Christianity which might play a role in child sexual abuse.¹³ One can go through book after book, academic or popular, psychological or sociological, without finding a single reference to religion or the dynamics of religious belief in child sexual abuse cases.¹⁴

The problem is that the issue of child abuse (not even the limiting sexual assault or incest issue) is not dealt with in the psychology of religion either. In Wulff's new introductory work to the psychology of religion, there is one indexed reference to child abuse and it refers to the possibility of Freud's having been

¹²This is also a problem in pastoral material on religious issues as they relate to family violence. See, for example, Andrew Lester, Pastoral Care with Children in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985) and Andrew Lester, ed., When Children Suffer: A Sourcebook for Ministry with Children in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987) where there is only one chapter ("Abused Children", pp. 125-37) which discusses sexual and physical abuse of children.

¹³Two major exceptions to this are Annie Imbens-Fransen and Ineke Jonkers, Godsdienst en incest: de Horstink I.S.M. de Vereniging tegen Seksuele Kindermishandeling binnen het Gezin (Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1985) and Poling, Abuse of Power.

¹⁴Look at the index of any book discussed in this thesis that is not specifically about religion or written from a religious perspective. The longest and most unique discussion of Christian responsibility for the nurturance of the existence of child sexual abuse is the sustained discussion in Florence Rush's The Best-Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), pp. 16-47.

sexually abused as a child.¹⁵ Since Wulff's book is a comprehensive introduction and "an integration of the theoretical, empirical, and clinical literatures,"¹⁶ even if selective, it indicates a lack of interest on the part of the discipline to the issues of abusive child-rearing practices and the role that Christianity and/or other religions play in its genesis.

a) The secular literature

From the point of view of some psychoanalysts and child psychiatrists, there is a definite connection between the religious structure of Christianity and its attitudes towards children and the incidence of child abuse.¹⁷ However, much of the work from the social sciences seems to indicate or imply that religion or religious factors play little role as a causative factor for abuse.¹⁸ The review of literature from the non-religious disciplines makes this point succinctly if only by the scarcity of

¹⁵Wulff, Classical and Contemporary, p. 303.

¹⁶Wulff, Classical and Contemporary, p. vii.

¹⁷See B. Steele and C. B. Pollock, "A Psychiatric Study of Parents Who Abuse Infants and Small Children," in R. E. Helfer and C.H. Kempe, eds., The Battered Child (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 93, Alice Miller, For Your Own Good: The hidden roots of violence in child rearing (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), Szasz, Myth, Watters, "A Psychiatrist's Assessment", Greven, Spare the Child, James Ritchie and Jane Ritchie, Spare the Rod (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia Pte Ltd, 1981).

¹⁸See Diana Russell and David Finkelhor, below.

references on the subject.¹⁹ The lack of referral to religious questions - even something as simple as religion of upbringing seems to indicate either a consensus on the lack of importance or perhaps the understanding that the religious question complicates matters for most researchers since they have little background in the intricacies of the varieties of religious belief or they are very uncomfortable with religious issues.²⁰

One recent example of this problem can be seen in an article by S. B. Dipietro.²¹ In this study, control groups and victim groups of sexually abused children were matched for age, socioeconomic status, birth order, number of children in the family, and race. However, there was no matching for religious beliefs.²² This would appear to be particularly peculiar since the

¹⁹See for example, Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1988) and Laura Davis, The Courage to Heal Workbook for Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989). These books contain a few pages (five in approx. one thousand) on 'spirituality' (pp. 52, 155-60). This lack of attention to religious issues is a constant occurrence. Therefore, there is a continuing problem for sexual assault victims and survivors with religious issues and how to put them in perspective.

²⁰James L. Griffith, "Employing the God-Family Relationship in Therapy with Religious Families" Family Process 25(1986), pp. 616-17, R. J. Lovinger, "Therapeutic strategies with "religious" resistances" Psychotherapy: Theory Research and Practice 16(1979), pp. 419-27 and R. J. Lovinger, Working with Religious Issues in Therapy (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1984).

²¹S. B. Dipietro, "The Effects of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse on the Adjustment and Attitudes of Adolescents" Violence and Victims 2:1(1987), pp. 59-78.

²²This cannot be a problem of 'civil or human rights' since there was matching for race, another ethical issue in data collection.

study was set in Salt Lake City which has a large population of Mormons, a Christian group noted for its patriarchal, authoritarian attitudes towards women and traditional family structure. The religious belief structure of participants itself could have helped to account for some of the anomalies the researcher feels that she found in her data regarding the poor self-image of the females in her study - whether sexually abused or not since there does seem to be some indicators that abuse and fundamentalist belief adherence are interrelated. This study would appear to begin to address one of the questions about the origins of child sexual abuse in the patriarchal structures of society. Herman argues that there is covert incest which can also have a debilitating effect on the females raised within patriarchal families, a position that is supported by Blume.²³ Dipietro's study might suggest that the relationship between fathers and daughters in incestuous type families does not differ except in quantity.²⁴

Psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts are often ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of the Christian

²³Herman, Father-Daughter, E. Sue Blume, Secret Survivors: Uncovering Incest and its Aftereffects in Women (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990).

²⁴More studies like that of Dipietro's have been called for. See Shirley J. Asher, "The Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse: A Review of the Issues and Evidence" in Lenore Walker, ed., Handbook on Sexual Abuse of Children: Assessment and Treatment Issues (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 13-14. Dipietro's work was not referred to in this article.

religious norms and value system.²⁵ There is often a tacit assumption on the part of secular counsellors that if the 'psychological' maladjustment is dealt with, the religious issues will take care of themselves. This has some basis in clinical data.²⁶ If the therapist allows religious questions to flow naturally during the therapy and is not hampered by countertransference problems and her/his own unresolved religious issues, changes in the relationship with the belief system will occur. The religious and dynamic factors are interrelated with everything else in the patient's life and there is a limited degree to which the therapist has to intervene directly when religious issues arise. It would seem that when dynamic issues are resolved, there is likely to be a concomitant shift in the belief system. However, if religious issues are important enough and are part of the defensive structures and blocking apparatus in therapy, letting go of god could be so terrifying that it is not worth the risk to the patient in order to solve the dynamic factors.

Religious people often seek out only religious counselling and unless the problems are severe, these patients never see secular therapists. But where are religious counselors supposed to go for integration by psychological theorists to help them find their way

²⁵Health care professionals (such as social workers, child care workers, nurses and those in the psychological professions) often have little patience with their Christian patients, particularly if the victims are fundamentalists or evangelicals. They feel that they cannot compromise their understanding of deity in order to ameliorate their patients' suffering and thus can exacerbate an already traumatic situation.

²⁶Lovinger, Working, p. 201.

through the maze of family, religion and society, that created the distorted thinking of the patient vis-a-vis their interrelationships? The religious material itself from the field of psychology of religion and pastoral counselling is more often than not theologically biased by the writers' religious belief system.²⁷ This makes their contributions limited and often frustrating for secular therapists who are trying to deal with the religious issues. There are few books like Lovinger's Working with Religious Issues in Therapy and only a handful of articles. Furthermore, it is not unfair to say that secular writers often treat religious issues with a kind of dismissal that can be called 'veiled contempt.'

Consequently, there can be said to be a singular lack of interest in religion and religious issues in the secular literature. Even if they have been a part of the therapeutic process, they do not become a part of the published case studies. Yet as Robert Lovinger has pointed out, understanding the religious presuppositions and structure of the belief system of a patient will greatly facilitate therapy.²⁸ Instead of letting the religious issues resolve themselves along the way, dealing with them may actually move the therapy along more quickly by giving more resources and explanatory systems of a client's behaviour for the therapist to draw upon.

²⁷Batson, "Getting Respect".

²⁸Lovinger, Working and "Therapeutic Strategies".

b) Pastoral counselling

The solution to the problem of religious issues used by some therapists is to work in consultation with a religious or pastoral counsellor and allow them to handle the religious issues as they arise. However, it is the findings of psychology and psychiatry, sociology and social work, which underlie any explanations and discussions of child sexual abuse in the Christian context. The explanations of these disciplines often have a major impact, for example, on how pastoral psychology centers its explanations of how to diagnose and help those who come to them for help in the religious context. However, the constraints of Christian theology will become noticeable in the way in which the problem is analyzed when compared with the material in the previous chapter on the psychological impact of child sexual abuse. The problem is that there is no analysis of the impact of biblical and religious teachings on the thinking of incest victims comparable to the vast material available for understanding the impact of Christian theology and interpretation on the lives of women.

When it comes to questions of incest, the pastoral counsellor or clergy is often ill-equipped to deal with the problem. They have had little in the way of training to deal with the entire problem of family violence, and have often been like the majority in assuming that it 'doesn't happen here.'²⁹ One article, in

²⁹M. D. Pagelow and P. Johnson, "Abuse in the American Family: The Role of Religion" in Anne L. Horton & Judith A. Williamson, Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough (Toronto: Lexington

talking about biases of treating professionals, cultural/social, personal, and professional, also includes religious values bias, focuses on the conflicts that may arise between clinicians and clergy, therapists and perpetrators, clergy and perpetrators. They discuss three main points contributing to the problem of treating incest perpetrators and victims with religious backgrounds:"

1. *It is not uncommon for the clergy to be unwilling to acknowledge the presence of incest perpetrators in the congregation.* A desire to view all adult church members as God-fearing may result in the child victim being called to repentance for fabricating vicious accusations of unspeakable evil about an active churchgoer. If clinicians treating offenders and their families believe the children's stories and attempt to treat perpetrators, they may be considered to be an obstruction to the work of God. In order to avoid this possible conflict between therapists and the clergy, it is recommended that a cooperative effort between the two sides be established and maintained.
2. *Conflict over what constitutes adequate and sufficient intervention.* Members of the clergy, in some cases, may believe that incest perpetrators who come forward, confess their transgression, and satisfy the prescribed requirements of repentance and forgiveness have completed the intervention process. Clinicians who expect perpetrators to address unresolved psychological issues, in addition to the spiritual steps described, may be perceived as interlopers into the religious realm, or infidels who deny the power of God to forgive and heal penitent sinners. Treating incest offenders takes time and treatment that, if too quick, will not be respected by savvy offenders.
3. *"God and I have worked it out."* One area of potential disagreement is the inclination of perpetrators to seek and find absolution from God. Perhaps in an attempt to

Books, 1988), pp. 1-12, Martin, Counseling.

³⁰Lynn M. Roundy, and Anne L. Horton, "Professional and Treatment Issues for Clinicians Who Intervene with Incest Perpetrators" in Anne L. Horton, Barry L. Johnson, Lynn M. Roundy, and Doran Williams, eds, The Incest Perpetrator: A Family Member No One Wants to Treat (London: SAGE Publications 1990), pp. 169-70.

circumvent what promised to be a long and painful spiritual and psychological process, one perpetrator approached his therapist, six weeks into the relationship, with a request that he intervene with the client's clergyman. When questioned further, the client responded that he wanted the clinician to "get my priest off my back. I took the matter of my sexual abuse to God in prayer, asked for forgiveness, and I have been told by Him that I am forgiven, and cleansed of the problem. Oh, by the way, He also said I would have no further need of counseling. I am well now." Clinicians, regardless of their level of religiosity, should find some difficulty with such a situation.

One of the suggestions made to ameliorate this problem is that pastoral counsellors and clergy seek out the professional resources available and refer their families there while remaining supportive."

Prevalence in Christian Environments

There is some indication from the secular sources and the Christian sources themselves that child sexual abuse is at least as serious a problem within the Christian community as it is outside it. For example, it is argued by one Christian social worker, based on his caseload over a twenty year period, that incest is a greater problem in Christian families than in secular ones.³² A feminist theologian involved with counselling services with a specific interest in religious issues for incest victims believes that it is a greater problem in religious homes and argues that

³²R. J. Kelly, "Identifying Sexual Abuse in Families and Engaging Them in Professional Treatment" in Horton and Williams, Abuse and Religion, pp. 39-48.

³³Peters, Betrayal of Innocence.

while statistics are unavailable for occurrence in a Christian context, even if it were not greater in Christian families than the general population, the peculiar religious factors in these homes makes the impact of the incest on these Christian victims more devastating and recovery more difficult.³³ Finding any statistics with respect to the occurrence of child sexual abuse within specifically Christian families and environments in relation to the general population is virtually impossible and, therefore, there must be a reliance on informal evidence (from Christian counsellors, newspapers and offhand references in studies focussed on other issues). The question of whether it occurs in a Christian context to a greater or lesser extent than in the general population must be left unanswered.³⁴

In one of the most comprehensive data gathering and analysis to date on incest, Diana Russell's, The Secret Trauma,³⁵ certain information concerning religious issues became part of the data. However, Russell refers to this information as the 'incidental gathering of religious data.' Although there were no questions related to religion or religious beliefs, many of the respondents,

³³Annie Imbens-Fransen, Daar Kun Je Beter (Niet) Overpraten: Werkboek over incest en godsdienstige opvoeding (Delft: W. D. Meinema B. V., 1987), pp. 57. The impact of the title of this work can best be translated by using the teenager's favourite expression these days - "NOT": Thus, You Can Talk About That - NOT! A Workbook on Incest in a Religious Environment.

³⁴However, see the discussion from Diana Russell's work below which could be the groundwork for further study.

³⁵ Diana E. H. Russell, The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986). The data in this study only relates to female victims of incest.

themselves, brought up religious issues. She found that 18% of women from Christian backgrounds in her study had been victimized by incest (18% Protestant, 17% Roman Catholic). This compared to 14% with no religious background and 13% for other religious affiliations.³⁶ The most startling finding was that only 10% of the women from Jewish homes were incest victims, and none involved father-daughter incest.³⁷ However, Russell points out that the numbers are not statistically significant for religion to be considered as a causative factor in incest.³⁸ Still, it remains the case that a female child in her study was between 3 & 4% more likely to be incestuously molested in a Christian home than in any of the other groups.

Jean Renvoise, in one of the earliest studies of incest, states that "Roman Catholics are vastly over-represented among drug addicts, alcoholics, compulsive gamblers etc., - 1 in 4 men in prison comes from a Roman Catholic background, an extraordinary statistic when you consider that the Catholic population is 1 in 10 in England & Wales. Since we know drug addiction and alcohol is

³⁶Ibid, pp. 112-3.

³⁷Ibid, pp. 112-3, 250. Even given Russell's caveats, this statistic is interesting since Christianity has its roots in the Jewish tradition. I would speculate that the differences have something to do with the different attitudes towards sexuality in Judaism and Christianity as well as the importance of the role of the female to the concept of purity in Orthodox Judaism. Important to this is the matrilineal nature of descent in Judaism. It may be that Christianity has left our society and children with a legacy which Judaism has not.

³⁸Ibid, pp. 112-3, 250. See also D. Finkelhor, Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research, (New York: The Free Press, 1984), p. 31.

linked with sexual abuse ... we may fairly expect incest also to be over-represented in this Catholic population."³⁹ Susan Forward quotes from one study which suggests at least a similar situation. "Indeed Catholics - whose religious training relies heavily on the exploitation of parishioners' guilt - constitute a disproportionately large percentage of incest aggressors and victims (44 percent of the Odyssey House study)."⁴⁰ However, Finkelhor's 1979 study showed a preponderance of Yankee stock, as he called Protestants, in his survey.⁴¹ This he compared to Weinberg's findings of a high number of Roman Catholics among his incest group⁴² as well as another study which found high rates among French Canadians. Finkelhor did find one sub-cultural factor of significance in his survey. An inordinately high number of Irish American males had had sexual experiences with significantly older unrelated males when they were young.⁴³ Mimi Silbert's

³⁹Jean Renvoise, Incest: A Family Pattern (London:: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 86. See The Church Now (1980).

⁴⁰S. Forward and C. Buck, Betrayal of Innocence: Incest and its Devastation (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 32.

⁴¹David Finkelhor, Sexually Victimized Children (New York: The Free Press), pp. 114-5.

⁴²S. K. Weinberg, Incest Behavior (New York: Citadel Press, 1955).

⁴³Based on A. Greeley's That Most Distrustful Nation (1972), Finkelhor suggests that the high degree of sexual suppression and segregation of the sexes in Irish American families might be part of the explanation of why Irish males are assaulted. I have two comments. One, Finkelhor doesn't state whether the abusers were also Irish Americans since the assaults were by *unrelated* males. Two, Irish American families in New England are primarily Roman Catholic and the problem of priest assault is only beginning to unravel. Given the intergenerational and pyramid nature of sexual

work with adolescent street prostitutes found that the majority of girls, often victims of incest, had come from middle class families with a formal religious atmosphere.⁴⁴ One study in Boston found that the number of Roman Catholics (64%) and the number of Protestants (23%) among the 156 abused children was similar to the religious makeup of the community base from which they came (68% Catholic, 24% Protestant).⁴⁵

Grant Martin feels that family violence is a problem in Christian families and, furthermore, he suggests that child sexual abuse "may be even more prevalent in the church community than any other kind of abuse."⁴⁶ David Peters has concluded from his cases

abuse, Finkelhor's call for added research is well warranted. Child Sexual Abuse, p. 115.

⁴⁴Cited in C. Bagley, "Mental Health and the In-Family Sexual abuse of Children and Adolescents" in B. Schlesinger, ed., Sexual Abuse of Children in the 1980's (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 37-8. See M. Silbert and A. Piven, "Sexual Abuse as an Antecedent to Prostitution," Child Abuse & Neglect 5(1981), pp. 407-11.

⁴⁵Gomez-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardarelli, Child Sexual Abuse, pp. 54-5.

⁴⁶Martin, Counseling, pp. 148-9. He also believes that the prevalence of family violence is at least similar in both Christian and non-Christian homes (pp. 15-16). He quotes from a 1973 study on child abuse (647 abusers, 500 nonabusers as control) from a researcher at the University of Southern California which discovered that 80% of the abusers claimed religious affiliation, compared with 62% of the nonabusers (p. 130, no reference given). However, three pages later, he notes that nonabusive families "were also more likely to participate in religious or other social groups," (p. 133, cf. R. S. Hunter and N. Kilstrom, "Breaking the Cycle in Abusive Families" American Journal of Psychiatry 136(1979), pp. 1320-22). On page 165 he says "The discussion will continue to focus primarily on incest, because of its widespread occurrence, particularly within the church community."

over many years that "Christian families are not only susceptible to this most dangerous problem, but often seem to be primary targets ... [and] that child sexual abuse is a key issue afflicting the health of the body of Christ."⁴⁷ A study from the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, which surveyed 167 pastors and Christian counsellors on incest, found that these counsellors had dealt with 981 cases of incest.⁴⁸

Another indication for determining prevalence of a Christian context for this problem which has received high media profile is the problem of paedophilia among Roman Catholic priests and brothers.⁴⁹ Child sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests can be considered to have an extreme impact on the victims because the church, by doctrine, and the laity, by faith, place priests on a pedestal. Therefore the church, by any moral standard, bears a

⁴⁷Peters, Betrayal of Innocence, p. 13. (emphasis added).

⁴⁸Peters, Betrayal of Innocence, pp. 19-20. See Martin, Counseling, p. 149. (Phyllis P. Hart and Mary Torzien, "Survey of Pastors and Counselors on Incest" Paper read at Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Dallas, May 1984).

⁴⁹The editors, "Priest child abuse cases, victimizing families; bishops lack of policy response" National Catholic Reporter 21:32 (June 7, 1985), pp. 1, 4, Arthur Jones, "Legal action against pedophile priests grow" National Catholic Reporter 21:32 (June 7, 1985) pp. 4-6 and Jason Berry, "Pedophile priest: study in inept church response" National Catholic Reporter 21:32 (June 7, 1985), pp. 6, 19-21. Michael Harris, Unholy Orders: Tragedy at Mount Cashel (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, Canada, 1990). Outside of the cases related above, there have been cases reported from everywhere in North America, from Texas to Alfred, Ontario. Marty Gervais, "Carrying cross in aftermath of scandal" The Saturday Windsor Star (July 22, 1989), pp. E6-7.

great responsibility for the abuse.⁵⁰ A National Catholic Reporter editorial in 1988, after the U.S. bishops issued a statement on paedophilia among priests, critically assessed the report as being overly concerned with legalities. This is a moral crisis, not a legal one, the editors said and listed four positions the Catholic church should take. "First, find out the facts and share them openly. ... Second, take an unequivocal stand in identifying and removing from pastoral service any and all who have been convicted of pedophilia offense and who have otherwise compromised the trust that is the hallmark of their ministries. ... Third, develop a national policy that responds to the pastoral needs of victims and their families. ... Fourth, do not fall back on the advice of lawyers. In the final analysis, this is a moral issue that cries out for moral and pastoral answers. ..."⁵¹

The impact not only includes all the factors normally associated with incest but just as importantly, it has an irreversible effect on the child's and her or his parents'

⁵⁰See the summary of the three volume, Winter Commission Report in Newfoundland. "The Report of the Archdiocesan Commission of Inquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by members of the Clergy: Conclusions and Recommendations" The Monitor, insert (July 1990), pp. 1-7. One aspect of the Newfoundland case at Mount Cashel orphanage is unique in North America. Archbishop Penny's statement that "we are a sinful church" has been difficult for many to accept. He is alone in all of North America from the Roman Catholic hierarchy to take ultimate responsibility for what happened, and for the coverup. He has tendered his resignation and it has been accepted by Rome.

⁵¹The editors, "Priest pedophilia crisis grows" National Catholic Reporter (January 8, 1988), p. 12. Compare this to Paprocki, Thomas J., "Clergy Malpractice and the Law" The Priest 43(Sept. 1987), pp. 13-19.

religious beliefs. Outrage and loss of faith are two immediate consequences of the discovery that a priest has been sexually molesting children under his care and instruction. This abuse of trust causes the same kind of grief and destruction of relationships as intrafamilial child sexual assault. In fact, there seems to be a close relationship between the reactions of families to disclosures and subsequent denial from the family members in cases involving priests, as there has been about child sexual assault and incest, in particular, in the general population where denial is the common reaction and the fault often belongs to the victims.⁵²

What becomes clear from the 'priest' cases is that the priest is considered 'holy' and to small children - God. It is useless to talk about metaphors and symbols as they are supposed to be understood by adults. For children, these relationships, symbols and metaphors are a concrete reality since the abuse often occurs during the concrete phase of development when abstraction abilities are limited. Like the father, the pedophilic priest has characteristically been in a virtually unassailable position, which has made it extremely easy for these men to abuse children. Part of this religious 'halo' is the important fact that the priest is called "father" by his parishioners, both adults and children.⁵³

⁵²For example, see the letters to the Editor in "Repertee", The National Catholic Reporter, July 5, 1985, pp. 12-13, 16; July 19, 1985, pp. 24-25; February 12, 1988, p. 19; April 15, 1988, p. 20.

⁵³John Paul II, Pope, "Priests' Spiritual Fatherhood," 1988 Holy Thursday Letter, Origins 17:43(April 7, 1988), pp. 737-40.

Another important fact is the sacramental nature of Roman Catholic priesthood, where the priest has become an incarnation of Christ through the sacrament of Order.⁵⁴ One of the facts of the Catholic priesthood is that the priests' actions have no impact on the efficacy of the sacraments. As long as a priest does not commit heresy, and sexual behaviors such as pedophilia are not heresy, then his sacraments are valid and his position unassailable.⁵⁵

Further experiential data for this kind of analysis can be found in the history of the Indian community of Alkali Lake. Initially this community solved an enormous problem of alcoholism

⁵⁴The intergenerational nature of the abuse is highly suggestive of the probability that the pedophilic priest was himself sexually molested as a child. Until there is more data available, it will be a long time before we get the information we need to really handle the problem. The pity is the great reluctance of the Roman Catholic church's homes for sexually dysfunctioning and substance abusing priests and nuns to publish any data or talk to anyone about the reality of what their clients tell them.

⁵⁵However, in Canada there is talk of 'firing' priests who commit acts against youths. This certainly would give satisfaction to some parishioners and other priests but this smacks of the church washing its hands of responsibility for its priests' behaviour. Outside of the difficulties this poses on a theological level, the church would then be abandoning members of its congregation just as it did when it handled child sexual abuses problems by covering up for its priests. Besides in the case referred to here, some of his parishioners would take him back with open arms! Peter Hum and Senan Molony, "Priest faces dismissal: Catholic church reopens inquiry after Irish court jails local priest" The Ottawa Citizen July 26, 1991, p. B1. The pity in this case was that one and a half years ago in Ottawa this priest had been charged with sexually assaulting a minor. The victim had been harassed; the priest was found not guilty by a judge who refused to feel that a skateboarder was shy and embarrassed about being molested. In Ireland, the priest, Rev. Michael Mullins received eight years, and the police and defense lawyers in Ottawa were "astounded at the severity of the Irish judge's sentence." The Ottawa Citizen (July 26, 1991), p. B1.

among its members. As this problem was being resolved, the problem of the sexual abuse of children began to emerge. The number of Indian males, in particular, who had been abused by priests while they lived in dormitory, church-run schools was high.⁵⁶ The sexual abuse then spread like a pyramid structure through the generations in the community. A whole culture had been structured for abuse - to be abusive, depressive, alcoholic, promiscuous and suicidal within the environmental setting of Christianity. This is something for which the Christian ethos must bear responsibility.⁵⁷

Profile of the Christian Incest family

a) Family Structure

Similar to families where father-daughter incest occurs in the general population, Christian incest families tend to have rigidly structured patterns of behaviour for its members - what are known as rigid sex role definitions. The male is the head of the family

⁵⁶Basil Johnston, Indian School Days (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) and Donald B. Smith, Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquanaby) and the Mississauga Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

⁵⁷One hour documentary on Man Alive, CBC, 1988. See also Tony Martens, Brenda Daily and Maggie Hodgson, The Spirit Weeps: Characteristics and Dynamics of Incest and Child Sexual Abuse with a Native Perspective (Edmonton, Alta: Nechi Institute, 1988). The Oblate Fathers in Canada have taken as step in this direction. "Oblates' mea culpa to natives" The Ottawa Citizen (July 26, 1991), p. A11, "Oblates celebrate a proud but controversial past: Sex assault charges, slew of allegations casts pall over history" The Ottawa Citizen (August 17, 1991), p. H7.

who is supposed to be obeyed. The mother obeys her husband and raises the children. The children are obedient. This is highlighted in Steele and Pollack who found that while there were abusive parents from most religious backgrounds, those who were actively involved in their religion had a greater than average adherence to a strong, rigid, authoritarian, "fundamentalist" type of belief.⁵⁸ In 1975, J. Hastings completed a doctoral dissertation which confirmed this finding.⁵⁹ He made certain pertinent statements regarding religion and child abuse which can now be expanded to include child sexual abuse. Contrary to other findings, Hastings pointed out that the vast majority of abusive parents professed affiliation with some religious group. The nature of the child abuser tends to be very respectful of church authority and the church is often the first place to which these abusive families turn. He also states that there is a greater than average adherence to fundamentalist types of belief, which are highly authoritarian by definition.⁶⁰ His only statement on sexual

⁵⁸Steele and Pollack, "A Psychiatric Study", p. 93.

⁵⁹J. Hastings, Child Abuse: Viewing it as a National Problem and the Church as a Resource, Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Claremont, Cal.: Claremont School of Theology, June 1975).

⁶⁰As in Steele and Pollock, "A Psychiatric Study", n. 3 above. This finding also coincides with the work of K. Neufeld, "Child-Rearing, Religion and Abusive Parents" Religious Education, 74(1979), pp. 234-44. Although the purpose of her M.A. thesis was to disprove Steele and Pollock - and she feels that she has done so, - a close reading of the thesis on which this article is based, shows that her data supports Steele and Pollock's position, viz. that abusive parents with a religious belief system maintain a more fundamentalist authoritarian form of belief. (Her problem stems from a misreading of Steele and Pollock. She states that they "theorized from their research that, for those who were actively

abuse was that it "... is not considered as child abuse unless it involves the use of physical force or threats against the child."⁶¹

Renvoise notes, "An unexpected finding is that a number of incestuous families are extremely religious; and to some incest is thought to be preferable to adultery."⁶² The resulting profile of incest families from the Fuller Theological Seminar study accords with secular research on the subject with one glaring exception. Fathers in this study were more often the abusers than were stepfathers.⁶³ This finding is the opposite of the findings of most child sexual abuse surveys and authors.⁶⁴ For example, in Diana Russell's extensive survey, stepfathers were 7 times more likely to be the offenders than were biological fathers.⁶⁵ The

involved in their religion, there was a more authoritarian approach to child rearing...(p. 64)" Nothing could be further from the truth. Kathryn Neufeld, Child-rearing Attitudes of Child-Abusive Parents and Religiously Affiliated Parents, MSc. Thesis (Fresno: Department of Health Science, California State University, May 1978). See also Hastings, Child Abuse, p. 26 in which 80% of abusers mention religious affiliation with a greater than average adherence to a "strong, rigid, authoritarian, 'fundamentalist' type of belief."

⁶¹Hastings, Child Abuse, p. 5. In fairness, it must be pointed out that in 1975 the scope of the problem of child sexual abuse was barely understood and certainly had yet to become a major social issue. See the position of David Walters, Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children: Causes and Treatment (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975). For a discussion of the failure of Walters to understand the dynamics of family interaction in incest see Herman, Father-Daughter, pp. 76, n. 12.

⁶²Renvoise, Incest, p. 70

⁶³Peters, Betrayal of Innocence, p. 20.

⁶⁴Finkelhor, Sexually Victimized and Child Sexual Abuse, Herman, Father-Daughter.

⁶⁵Russell, The Secret Trauma, pp. 233-4, 256-69.

Fuller study results are further confirmed by a self-report study on father-daughter incest in Christian families done by Vincent Gil.⁶⁶ Again biological fathers were the primary sexual abusers of their daughters. Interestingly though, biological fathers were less likely to attempt or complete actual intercourse than were stepfathers.⁶⁷

b) The Christian Father

Roland Summit, a noted expert in the field, states that the male abusers are more religious than the norm.⁶⁸ Susan Forward notes that many aggressors are regular churchgoers and this may contribute to their incest motivations by providing an excuse for not seeking sexual relationships outside the family structure. She quotes one Catholic father, when asked by police why he had seduced his daughter instead of hiring a prostitute, as replying incredulously, "What? And cheat on my wife?"⁶⁹ Jean Renvoise commenting on the abusers says "their respect for organized religion - in America at least - is something referred to again and

⁶⁶"In Thy Father's House: Self-Report Findings of Sexually Abused Daughters from Conservative Christian Homes" Journal of Psychology and Theology 16(1988), pp. 144-52.

⁶⁷This is not found in other studies. For example, there was no difference in types of abuse attributable to the offender's relationship to the child in Gomes-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardarelli, Child Sexual Abuse, p. 66.

⁶⁸"The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome," Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal, 7(1983), p. 182.

⁶⁹Forward, Betrayal of Innocence, p. 32.

again."⁷⁰ Given her comment on incest and Roman Catholicism above, her reticence about generalizing may be related to a lack of statistical data, a continuing problem. This would perhaps indicate that the families in which daughters were victimized were regular churchgoing families.

In his discussion of the traits of an incest offender, Grant Martin focuses on the idea that from the outside the offender appears very religious, moralistic and conscientious.⁷¹ The offender is compared to the 'Pharisees as hypocrites' model in Christianity.⁷² Informal evidence from Dr. Henry Giaretto and Dr. Bob Rencken verifies the overrepresentation of rigidly religious fathers involved in incest. Furthermore, these fathers have very rigid moral codes with respect to sexual behavior. The analysis of the offender uses Groth's 'fixated and regressive' profiles.⁷³ Nowhere is the term 'pathology' used to describe the profile of the incestuous father. Terms such as 'poor self concept', 'lacks full control of his impulses', 'frustrated', 'level of socio-sexual maturation', need to 'defend against anxiety and to express an

⁷⁰Renvoise, Incest, p. 86. See Muldoon, L., ed., Incest - Confronting the silent crime, (Minneapolis, Minn.: The Minnesota Program for Victims of Sexual Assault, 1979).

⁷¹Martin, Counseling, pp. 158-61.

⁷²"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Matt. 23:27-8(RSV). This is hard to reconcile with Martin's following description of the incestuous Christian father.

⁷³Martin, Counseling, pp. 160-61.

unresolved conflict' are used instead. Not even in the discussion of fixated and regressed offenders is the term 'pathology' used.

Martin spends much time on treatment of the offender as compared to minimal space to the mother (see below and compare to Peters). Perhaps this is because of the headship role that Martin implicitly accords to the father in the Christian family (benign dictatorship as opposed to abusive dictatorship?). In fact, his closing remarks on child sexual abuse, 'The Christian Response to Sexual Abuse,' which will be more fully discussed in 'Solutions' below, seem to be more related to the Christian relationship with the abuser than to sexual abuse.⁷⁴

It is this religious character of the fathers that often leaves the daughters in a precarious position when they finally decide to reveal the sexual abuse. Butler tells the story of one girl who revealed her story to the juvenile hall counsellors. When they checked out who her father was, a church deacon as well as store owner and little league umpire, they told her to stop telling such terrible stories about her father and called him to pick her up.⁷⁵

c) The Christian Mother

⁷⁴Martin, Counseling, pp. 234-7.

⁷⁵Butler, Conspiracy of Silence. Cf. Blume, Secret Survivors, pp. 62-3.

Grant Martin's analysis of the mothers of incest victims is indicative of a problem in his work.⁷⁶ While pointing out that "not all offending mothers are expected to share in any type of pathology", his discussion focuses on four 'pathological' mother types.⁷⁷ He arranges their pathology under the following headings "the passive child-woman mother," the rejecting, vindictive mother," "the intelligent, competent, distant mother," and "the psychotic or severely retarded mother." It should be noted that Martin leans heavily on Suzanne Sgroi's Handbook of Clinical Interventions in Child Sexual Abuse⁷⁸ for the psychological material on child sexual abuse throughout this section.⁷⁹ The analysis of the 'incest mother' is the one place where he deviates from this practice.⁸⁰ While Sgroi and Dana do not attempt to

⁷⁶However, his section on battered women is not too detrimental, although there certainly is a tendency (as in many Christian books meant to help battered women) to find women guilty of the sin of passivity. Martin, Counseling, pp. 72-96.

⁷⁷Martin, Counseling, pp. 161-65.

⁷⁸S. M. Sgroi, ed., Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse (Toronto: Lexington Books, D. C. Heath and Company, 1984(1982)). This book serves as a classic in the field of child sexual assault intervention and treatment, yet it contains nary a word about religion.

⁷⁹Martin, Counseling, p. 273, Chapter 7, nn. 12, 16-18, 23-27; Chapter 8, nn. 1-3; p. 273, Chapter 9, nn. 3-14, 16.

⁸⁰Martin, Counseling, p. 273, nn. 19-22. While not wanting to place too much weight on the following, it is interesting in light of his analysis of mothers of incest victims. On page 144 when he is talking about child abuse in general, he uses the following example of the multiple combination of personality types and circumstances that can operate as a precursor to abuse. "For example, during a period of unemployment, a parent who had been abused as a child, resulting in a strong belief in corporal punishment, and who had a limited ability to manage her anger,

render the mothers blameless, the use of 'pathology' to describe these mothers is not used. Rather, terms such as low self-esteem, lack of trust, fear of new relationships, dependent, 'psychologically absent' inability to set limits, poor self image, and diminished body awareness are the comparable descriptions used for the mothers of incest victims.⁸¹ If Martin had used these terms, they would have been comparable to his analysis of the offender. As it stands, he had to go elsewhere for his pathological profile of the mother.⁸² Only the passive child-woman is mentioned as a victim of physical and/or sexual abuse when a child. On the other hand, for example, the husband and children are so afraid of the rejecting, vindictive mother that intervention is difficult.⁸³ Furthermore, there is no section in

might "lose it" and batter a clumsy child who drops the mother's favorite vase." (emphasis added) Why he decides at this moment to use a non-stereotypical example (since it is usually the father who loses his job, and resorts to battering from a sense of powerlessness) should be questioned in light of his pathological mother scenario.

⁸¹S. M. Sgroi and N. T. Dana, "Individual and Group Treatment of Mothers of Incest Victims" in Sgroi, Handbook, pp. 191-214.

⁸²The book he used was Beverly James and Maria Nasjleti, Treating Sexually Abused Children and Their Families (Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologist Press, 1983), pp. 25-27.

⁸³This makes the mother responsible for the abuse and responsible for the failure of therapy. It might be suggested that Martin probably understands why her poor husband abused his daughter! Peters' suggestion that Satan tempts men to commit incest looks like a positive interpretation of the facts compared to Martin's misogyny.

Martin's book for the treatment of mothers,⁸⁴ although Sgroi's book contains an entire chapter on the treatment of mothers of incest victims as well as a chapter on offenders. Given the pivotal, nurturing position traditionally allotted to women as mothers within Christian households, this is a glaring and perhaps telling insight. However, in keeping with the traditional role of women in the family, perhaps Martin assumes that the only thing necessary for the treatment of mothers is found in 'Working with the Incestuous Family.'⁸⁵ In view of the fact that Martin writes one chapter on the treatment of the victim and one on the treatment of the abuser it is fair to ask what he really thinks of women. The tendency toward the 'scapegoating of mothers'⁸⁶ will find much support solely from the structure of these chapters on child sexual abuse.

d) The Christian Daughter

Sometimes older children have taken advantage of the favored position with the offender. Or they may have acted inappropriately toward their brothers and sisters. In other cases, they may have become very manipulative or

⁸⁴Although he does mention that it is crucial to restore the mother-daughter bond, make the mothers more powerful, and that mothers should be counselled in a group. Martin, Counseling, pp. 209-10.

⁸⁵Martin, Counseling, pp. 232-235.

⁸⁶See Paula Caplan and Ian Hall-McCorquodale, "Mother-blaming in Major Clinical Journals" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 55(1985), pp. 345-53 and "The Scapegoating of Mothers: A Call for Change" op. cit., pp. 610-13. See also Paula Caplan, The Myth of Women's Masochism (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985).

disobedient. Such youngsters may be experiencing some appropriate guilt for their conduct, and you need to help them sort through the distinctions. *If there is legitimate guilt, the child should be helped to work it through and redirect their behavior.*⁸⁷

Martin also assumes that children lie about child sexual abuse and false accusations come out of divorce proceedings.⁸⁸ This section, which is under 'Preparing for an Interview,' explains about unfounded types of investigations. At this point there are no qualifiers about the false accusation such as exists in Peters and just about every other book on child sexual assault.⁸⁹ However, later Martin does mention that in only 1 to 5 percent of cases fabrication may occur, and then it is an indicator of other problems in the family.⁹⁰ But he also lists why lies occur: opportunism, encouragement from adult confederate, sexually abused by someone else and generalized to the person presently accused or has serious personality disorder and/or loss of contact with reality.⁹¹ What he doesn't include is the fact that there are often recantations because it is too difficult for the daughter to continue telling the truth with little or no external support. In a work critiquing the Canadian commission report on the sexual assault of children, one finds that a child "... may not have

⁸⁷Martin, Counseling, p. 205. Emphasis added.

⁸⁸Martin, Counseling, p. 179.

⁸⁹As Peters points out: "children lie to get out of trouble not to get into it."

⁹⁰Martin, Counseling, p. 197.

⁹¹Martin, Counseling, p. 179.

adequate abilities to distinguish truth from fantasy."⁹² This despite the fact that the Badgley report is replete with personal stories.

Causes of the Abuse

The very qualities we instill in our children; loving one another, respecting adults, being kind to all and obeying authority figures, are the "handles" that the molester, the pornographer and the deviate would use to destroy our children.

Because these godly teachings make our children particularly vulnerable to offenders, we must look to another principle in God's Word to provide the protection he would have us afford His little ones.⁹³

In Christian literature there is little that addresses the causes of the abuse. In the descriptive literature, there is some focus on pointing out the risk factors. As the above quote indicates, there is almost no critical analysis of the Christian precepts as they are taught to children and how they may be used by children to understand the abuse. The understanding that they may be used by adults to further their own abusive interests does not lead to the possibility that these qualities need to be reexamined.⁹⁴ Furthermore, there is little written that would

⁹²Church Council on Justice and Corrections "Brief to the Minister of Justice Regarding the Badgley Report on Sexual Offenses Against Children," (Ottawa: November 1985). Part 1, Section 2.1

⁹³Dr. William Katz, Parents Teaching Guide to Protecting Your Children From Sexual Assault (Toronto: Little Ones Books, 1984) p. 8. That principle is to be found in the biblical text, Hosea 4:6.

⁹⁴The broader implications of the difficulty many Christians have in incorporating the insights of the world outside their particular purview is examined by John M. Hull, What Prevents

indicate that there may be something wrong with the way in which family relationships have been structured and that this itself may have contributed to abusive situations.

a) Humanity's fallen nature

The two major Christian writers whose books are among the few devoted to issues of incest find the cause of sexual assault on children in the fallen nature of human beings. David Peters, in trying to address the issue of why there is so much incest among Christian clients, comes to the conclusion that it is in Satan's best interest to work harder at tempting Christian men to sin by sexually abusing their daughters than it is to tempt those who are already damned.⁹⁵ Peters believes that incest is a greater problem in Christian families than in the non-Christian world.⁹⁶ Grant Martin's explanation for the amount of abuse found in Christian families argues that Christians are only human beings. Therefore, the existence of sexual assault on children emphasizes how truly fallen we are.⁹⁷ Christians, he states are not immune to the vicious cycle of family violence. He feels that these Christian men misuse and wrongly interpret selected scriptures to justify

Christian Adults from Learning? (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, International, 1991(1985)). See also James Barr, Escaping from Fundamentalism (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1984).

⁹⁵Peters, Betrayal of Innocence.

⁹⁶See prevalence, above.

⁹⁷Martin, Counseling, pp. 214-6.

their authoritarian, dogmatic behavior (such as "children, obey your parents" and "wives, submit yourselves to your husband"). He accepts that sexual assault by fathers is indicative of other problems, and the remainder of his discussion of the causes child sexual abuse are concerned with the offenders' immaturity and inability to effectively communicate their needs.

b) Attitudes towards sexuality

Grant Martin feels that sexual assault is in the service of other needs. He also states that the attitude towards sex in Christian families where sex is not talked about is a part of the problem.⁹⁸ In the Church Council on Justice and Corrections report, in its request for pretrial diversion for fathers accused of sexually assaulting their daughters, the statement is made that "sexual crimes are not of the same nature as crimes against property or of vengeance(sic) ..."⁹⁹ Furthermore, it also states that the prison "turns out people so damaged that they sexually abuse children,"¹⁰⁰ a statement at odds with the idea earlier in the report that pedophiles were often sexually abused as

⁹⁸Martin, Counseling, p. 215.

⁹⁹Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Response, Part II, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Response, Part III, pp. 3-4.

children.¹⁰¹

In one of the few sustained discussions in the area of sexual ethics of Christianity and sexual violence,¹⁰² Marie Fortune argues that it is attitudes towards sexuality found among Christians (and in western society generally) that are responsible for our sexually violent society. It is within the structure of sexual ethics in Christianity that the seeds for non-consensual sexuality is found. She talks about sexual violence in scripture,¹⁰³ in the Christian tradition¹⁰⁴ and traditional Christian sexual ethics¹⁰⁵ on females who were sexually assaulted. Her analysis is in the interest of reshaping Christian sexual ethics and places the blame on the attitudes towards women promulgated in the scriptures and Christian theology. She argues that sexual activity is confused with sexual violence. Sexuality has primarily been thought of as being on a straight line but as essentially violent, with normal sexual

¹⁰¹Church Council on Justice and Corrections, "Brief to the Minister," Part II, p. 7. There is also disconcerting confusion in this report concerning the distinction between pedophilia and homosexuality. This group is also responsible for Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture: A Challenge to Our Way of Living (Ottawa: Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Canadian Council on Social Development, Health and Welfare Canada, 1988) which is full of resource material on violence against women and children in our society.

¹⁰²Marie Fortune, Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981).

¹⁰³Fortune, Sexual Violence, pp. 44-61. She refers to, among others, Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:1-23), the Levite's concubine (Judges 19:11-30) and the rape of Dinah (Gen. 34).

¹⁰⁴Fortune, Sexual Violence, pp. 61-70.

¹⁰⁵Fortune, Sexual Violence, pp. 70-76.

activity at one end of the line and rape at the other end of the line. What underlies this attitude is that women don't really like sex, therefore, at some level, they are always coerced. Rape then becomes only an extreme expression of sexual activity.¹⁰⁶ Her discussion of standard sexual ethics in both Protestant and Roman Catholic denominations shows that this understanding has prevailed across the spectrum.¹⁰⁷

c) The patriarchal influence on Christianity

Muriel Duncan, a writer for The United Church Observer, and Lois Wilson, a United Church Minister and Past President of the World Council of Churches, both argue that it is the present Christian worldview that has fostered physical and sexual child abuse within the family structure.¹⁰⁸

In her thought provoking book, The Best Kept Secret,¹⁰⁹ Florence Rush makes a massive indictment of the institutions of Christianity, its dogma and politics, for the continuation of the

¹⁰⁶Fortune, Sexual Violence, pp. 30-39.

¹⁰⁷She suggests that there are two types of sexual activity. The first is consensual (from receptive to pro-active sexuality) and the second is non-consensual (from coercive "sex" to rape). Furthermore, non-consensual sexual activity is not about sex and relationships but about the exercise of power. Fortune, Sexual Violence, pp. 99-120.

¹⁰⁸Muriel Duncan, "Dark Secrets: The Abuse of Our Children," The United Church Observer (Toronto: August, 1985), pp. 20-5. Lois Wilson, Keynote Address, Vanier Institute of the Family, 1985.

¹⁰⁹Rush, Best Kept, see specifically chapters two and three, pp. 16-47.

sexual abuse and misuse of children. She is unequivocal in her portrayal of the damning role that the western Graeco-Judeo-Christian tradition has played in the maintenance and therefore justification of child sexual abuse.¹¹⁰ The maintenance of a dualistic system, continuation of its misogynist tradition, and the justification of the physical abuse of children as a proper part of child rearing, all play a role within the Christian religious system and are detrimental to those who suffer from child sexual abuse.

The only work which contains a sustained discussion of the specifics of Christian teachings as they relate to incest survivors, Godsdienst en incest,¹¹¹ contains indepth interviews with ten survivors of incest and the impact that their Christian beliefs have had and continue to have on their understanding of the sexual assault that they had experienced and on their religious understanding. It contains an indictment of the Christian belief system and the role it has played in incest. The authors conclude that Christianity is imbued throughout with patriarchal thinking and structures. They call for the removal of the patriarchal structure of Christianity no matter what the cost to the belief system.

d) Extreme separation of male and female roles

¹¹⁰However, Rush maintains that there is no prohibition of father-daughter incest in Leviticus. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹¹¹Imbens-Fransen and Jonkers, Godsdienst en incest.

Vincent Gil argues that the extreme separation of male-female roles in conservative Christian homes plays a major role in the lack of bonding between biological fathers and their daughters and thus leads to a breaking of the incest taboo. However, this does not account for the fact that Christian stepfathers who would have no early bonding with their stepdaughters do not appear to betray their stepdaughters' sexual integrity as often as do biological Christian fathers in his study. This has an important bearing on any analysis of causes of child sexual abuse and on the theoretical attempts to put a stop to abuse. Both the Fuller and Gil studies suggest that the problem may not simply be one of early parental bonding between fathers and daughters, part of the suggested solution by some theorists,¹¹² but rather strengthens the argument that the root of child sexual abuse is to be found in our patriarchal societal structure and its attitudes towards women and children.¹¹³ This does not fully explain the anomaly in the

¹¹²See Russell, Secret Trauma, pp. 256-9, part. 260-2.

¹¹³The anomaly may in part be explained by the ownership of children. If the biological father owns his children he can do as he sees fit, the stepfather cannot. See Bohn, "Dominion to Rule." See Louise Armstrong, "The Cradle of Sexual Politics: Incest," in M. Kirkpatrick, ed., Women's Sexual Experience: Explorations of the Dark Continent (New York: Plenum Press, 1982), pp. 109-126. Louise Armstrong, Kiss Daddy Goodnight (New York: Hawthorn Press, 1978). Judith Herman, Father-Daughter Incest (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 49-63. Asher, "Effects", pp. 13-16. Of course one of the questions which springs to mind in this difference is 'what impact does the prohibition against divorce in Christian circles have on this?' since part of the profile of the Christian abuser is his devout, very moralistic and conservative religious beliefs. See Martin, p. 149.

Christian family but does create an area for further research.¹¹⁴

e) The image of god

James Poling has spent much time working with one of the most difficult parts of the incest problem, counseling the abuser. From this work, he argues that there is a need to change the Christian conception of god. He argues that the causes of incest are found in the abuse of power endemic in our society and that this abuse of power is a theological problem because it is integrated into the very nature of the biblical god. The Christian god of the Bible and tradition has left very conflicting messages and little that can be of support for incest victims.¹¹⁵

Impact on and of the Religious Belief System

In Diana Russell's study, there was a high rate of defection from the religion of upbringing for both Christian groups of women(56%). However, the impact of incest on religious belief was only relevant to Catholic women. Those who had been incest victims were twice as likely to leave their Catholic upbringing than were non-victimized Catholic women(56% compared to 28% for non-victims).

¹¹⁴Gomez-Schwartz, Horowitz and Cardelli in Child Sexual Abuse, do not break down the religious findings into biological versus stepfather findings. The percentage of biological and father figures as perpetrators is about equal.

¹¹⁵Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 153-77.

This result was not found with any of the other groups including the Protestant group, where there was a similar defection from the religion of upbringing by Protestant victims (56% - the same as Catholic victims) as non-victims(43%).¹¹⁶ Russell suggests that the reason for the high level of Catholic defections may be due to the fact that the more blame is laid on the victim in Catholicism than in other religious backgrounds.¹¹⁷

The suggestion that relating to a male god becomes a problem for survivors of sexual assault slips into a long list of impact possibilities and is not commented on again by a priest therapist who writes an article on sexual assault of children by priests.¹¹⁸ Grant Martin also makes only fleeting reference to anything that might be particular to the religious context of sexual assault in a Christian family. Among a long list of behavioral indicators, Martin mentions a preoccupation with death, guilt, heaven or hell¹¹⁹ with no further comment.¹¹⁹

There are a few instances where Susan Forward relates instances of religious beliefs and their role on the thought

¹¹⁶Russell, Secret Trauma, pp. 119-22.

¹¹⁷Russell, Secret Trauma. The matter is complex and difficult for someone only peripherally engaged in religious belief systems and factors. For example, since there is such an extreme valuation placed on virginity and purity in Catholicism, the betrayal of trust is greater and the dissonance created between theory and practice can be extreme. Certainly the impact of the incest on Catholic women is significant and the negative finding of no father-daughter incest within the Jewish group bears further study.

¹¹⁸McHugh, "Abuse of Power", p. 25.

¹¹⁹Martin, Counseling, p. 155.

structures of incest survivors in her book, Betrayal of Innocence. She tells of one patient who had been molested by her grandfather. When he died she felt responsible and guilty for his death. She was afraid he would return and could not look at the crucifix because the idea of the resurrection would bring up the possibility of her grandfather's return and further abuse which led to even more guilt for not wanting him to be resurrected.¹²⁰ Another case of grandfather incest involved a minister who justified his actions by assuring his granddaughter that it was "God's will." In this case, the mother who had also been molested by the man when she was a child, was an active silent partner in the incest and sent her daughter every weekend to stay with the grandfather.¹²¹ Another woman was a victim of extensive sexual abuse, first by her mother, then her sister and many males - family members and others. At the age of nineteen, she went to confession and then into counselling with a priest whom she then seduced. The priest felt so guilty he

¹²⁰Forward, Betrayal, p. 114. This case had resulted in the development of a multiple personality disorder. It is here that one notes how our understanding of child sexual abuse and its relationship to multiple personality disorders has evolved. They are no longer considered rare and extensive child sexual abuse coupled with physical violence prior to the age of eight is assumed. Forward's development of thinking on the issues of child abuse can be seen in Dr. Susan Forward with Craig Buck, Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life (New York: Bantam Books, 1989). In this earlier book, when little was understood about the dynamics of child sexual abuse, its prevalence, the abused and the abuser, her analysis is sometimes limited. See Margo Rivera, Multiple Personality: An Outcome of Child Abuse (Toronto: Education/Dissociation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1991), Flora Rheta Schreiber, Sibyl (New York: Warner Books, 1973) and Truddi Chase, When Rabbit Howls (New York: Jove Books, 1987).

¹²¹Forward, Betrayal, p. 115.

asked for a transfer. This was the first time she felt guilty about sex and was astounded that the priest also felt guilty.¹²² The last story came from a woman who at fifty finally related the story of her abuse. Her uncle, a priest, sexually abused her when she was six. Raised in a religious French Canadian family, the priest was a source of pride for the family. When she told her parents of the abuse, she was called a "little whore" for telling such wicked stories about her uncle.¹²³ She carried the guilt for fifty years.

Solutions

There are two major solutions offered in the material, a) the model of benign paternalism, and b) a reshaping of the family unit under a covenantal model. A third solution is offered by James Poling and involves restructuring the theological position with respect to the Christian god.

a) Benign paternalism

The major emphasis in the Christian material is that of rebuilding the family unit. They all assume that the families where incest and other forms of violence against children and women occur are dysfunctional. This assumes that there is a functional

¹²²Forward, Betrayal, p. 123.

¹²³Forward, Betrayal, p. 172.

model of family, although it is seldom defined.¹²⁴ There is the unwritten assumption that the purpose of therapy for the incest family in Martin and others is to be able to manage to keep the family together.¹²⁵ There is a marked tendency to follow the approach of the 'family systems therapy model' analysis of incest for both explaining why it occurs and how to solve the problem.¹²⁶ This will be noted in almost all of the Christian material relating to child sexual abuse and family violence. There is a focus in this theory on a structural-functional analysis of incest, which holds that all partners in the incest family have varying levels of responsibility for the incest.¹²⁷ There is a tendency in this

¹²⁴To quote Paula Poundstone, comedienne, "Dysfunctional! That's what families do best! I mean, do you even know anyone who knows anyone who comes from a functional family?"

¹²⁵Martin, pp. 216. This is the case for most issues in family violence and Christianity. A reconstitution of the traditional model but only as a benign authoritarian model, is called for, either explicitly or implicitly. See for example P. Tokarski, "Child Physical Abuse: Assessment and Reporting Guidelines," in Horton and Williams, Abuse and Religion, p. 21-8 where there is no questioning of the use of physical assault in discipline only the lack of control of the abuser: "... the presence of marks after discipline indicates too much force was used and the medical diagnosis would be child abuse. (p. 22, emphasis added). Only a few ask that new ways of viewing family life be considered, as difficult as that may be. Pagelow and Johnson, p. 10.

¹²⁶Martin, Counseling, p. 180. Hastings, Church as a Resource. Kelly, "Identifying", pp. 45-6.

¹²⁷"Whether the knife falls on the melon or the melon falls on the knife, it is the melon that gets hurt" is a phrase that describes the problems with an analysis of family violence that holds everyone or no one is (equally) responsible for the violence that occurs in families. Many victims of father-daughter incest have suffered needlessly from this kind of family therapy. This phrase comes from a work which critiques the notion of family systems therapies (used to treat dysfunctional families) and how it does massive disservice to children and women because it glosses

material and in therapy towards viewing the maintenance of 'the family' as paramount with the attendant diminishment of the father's responsibility for the incest.¹²⁸

Peters also feels that rebuilding the family unit is important and primary,¹²⁹ but he gives certain qualifications. He points out the necessity for the molester to accept full responsibility for his actions.¹³⁰ Unlike Martin¹³¹ and others, he focuses on the Parents United model, which was begun by Henry Giaretto.¹³² This is a program with a focus on the mother and daughter or other child

over the power inequities in the social system. Thelma J. Goodrich, et al, Feminism and Family Therapy: a casebook (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 16-18.

¹²⁸Caplan, Myth, Culpepper, Social Work, Herman, Father-Daughter. This is not so surprising in that the founding 'father' of Family Systems Therapy, Salvador Minuchin, was a strong supporter of patriarchal values in his assumptions about how families should work. Betty Bayer, Feminism and Family Therapy: Intimate Strangers(Ottawa: Department of Psychology, Carleton University, 1987), pp. 77-169, Goodrich, Feminist.

¹²⁹Peters, Betrayal, pp. 128-9.

¹³⁰Peters, Betrayal, p. 132. It is not clear however, how this admonition would fit with his analysis of the broken human condition and the role of lust and uncontrollable male sex drive which he discusses earlier on pages 27-31 ('The World, the Flesh and the Devil'). See p. 32 for male sex drive.

¹³¹See Martin, p. 158 and 232 for his references to Giaretto and Parents United. Even more surprising is that he seems unaware of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence run by the United Church of Christ minister, Marie Fortune in Seattle, where he works. See Marie M. Fortune and Frances Wood, "The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence: A Study in Applied Feminist Theology and Ethics" Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 4(1988), pp. 115-22, and Marie M. Fortune, Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991).

¹³²Giaretto, "Comprehensive."

victims which, while not mitigating the mother's problematic role, allows no excuses for the abuser.

Hastings' 1975 thesis brings up certain issues which indicate the underlying view of the family which sustains most discussions of pastoral counseling in Christian families.¹³³ The first is that the child is considered equal partner in the abusive relationship even though this is not intended. For example, children are held responsible for controlling their phase-specific needs so that the parent will not abuse them.¹³⁴ Furthermore, Hastings describes the appropriate child/parent relationship in the following manner. The child owes her or his parents obedience due to God through the parents.¹³⁵ By being obedient, the child contributes to making his or her parents holy. Responsibility for behavior is thus placed upon the child with religious justification. The parent becomes the ultimate authority figure on earth. The second point is that it is argued that there is an absence of authority figures in abusive families without there being an adequate definition of 'authority'.¹³⁶ This, despite that fact that, as was discussed above, abusive parents are very authoritarian in their child-rearing methods and they have a greater than average adherence to authoritarian structures of belief, and this holds for Hastings'

¹³³Hastings, Child Abuse, pp. 37-44.

¹³⁴Hastings, Child Abuse, pp. 24-5.

¹³⁵Hastings, Child Abuse, p. 46-8.

¹³⁶Hastings, Child Abuse, pp. 47-8.

sample.¹³⁷

Hastings's solution to the problem of abusive families is found in the ideological structure called patriarchy and its most insidious form, benign paternalism. For him, extreme 'pharisaical' legalism is the root cause of the problem of violence against children, and by enacting new laws, the problem can be eradicated through parens patriae with support from the church community.¹³⁸

b) Marriage and family as covenantal

An alternate way of viewing family is to consider that the marriage contract is covenantal rather than hierarchical. This means that the relationships between the husband and wife and the children are based on certain assumptions about loving and caring in the relationship. If this ceases to exist, then it is possible to rethink the marriage vows.¹³⁹ The emphasis of Marie Fortune in, for example, Keeping the Faith¹⁴⁰, is that if the husband/father

¹³⁷Hastings, Child Abuse, p. 26.

¹³⁸Hastings, Child Abuse, pp. 51-72.

¹³⁹An interesting personal journey in which a woman works out much the same solutions to end her marriage can be found in Ann Taves, ed., Religion and Domestic Violence in Early New England: The Memoirs of Abigail Abbot Bailey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

¹⁴⁰Marie Fortune, Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987). See also Mitzi N. Eilts, "Saving the Family: When is Covenant Broken?" in Fortune, Violence in the Family, pp. 235-42. This article can also be found in Horton and Williamson, Abuse & Religion, pp. 207-14. This points out another problem in family violence and religion issues. One often finds the same article in

has broken the bonds of the family, he must be held not only accountable but perhaps unredeemable and the woman and daughter do not have to let him back into the family.¹⁴¹ Lois Wilson, in her keynote address at the 1985 annual meeting of the Vanier Institute of the Family, gave a lengthy explanation of this idea of the covenant relationship as it applies to God and Christians, with an emphasis on the Hebraic notion of covenant in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. This is then used as a model for family relationships. The covenant was a partnership, an agreement which could and should be renegotiated when necessary. This model is applicable to family relationships and necessary for positive growth of the members of the family and, by extension, the church and beyond.¹⁴²

An even more apparently radical solution is suggested by

numerous publications. While this is not unexpected, it indicates the paucity of publication in an area where this is limited material available to start with. One of the reasons may be that most of the authors are actively involved in the day to day counselling of abuse victims, a crisis-ridden, neverending field. See my article "Remember the Good, Forget the Bad: Denial and Family Violence in a Christian Worship Service" in Marjorie Procter-Smith and Janet Walton, eds, A Women's Worship Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, forthcoming).

¹⁴¹See, for example, Martin on divorce where divorce is not a considered option. Counseling, p. 23.

¹⁴²One of the prime problems for this analysis is that it depends ultimately on a use of biblical scripture as an authority and on the use of New Covenant theology. The Bible is itself an unabashedly patriarchal, hierarchical and authoritarian work, and New Covenant theology is based on supercession structures that presupposes the inadequacies and unfulfilled nature of particular prior covenantal structures. To create a family covenant based on the model of the relationship between the biblical god and his believers is to still create unequal relationships.

Muriel Duncan for the problems of sexual as well as physical assault in the family. She argues that the following concepts for family life must be deemed unacceptable in any form:¹⁴³

i) that the parents are the bosses - parent-child communication is more important for effective parenting than hierarchical, arbitrary authority;

ii) that parents are knowledgeable - we don't know who these children are who have been entrusted to our care, neither do we know what sort of a world they will face;

iii) that spanking is a form of love - violence only leads to violence and if a family sets limits which are only enforceable through physical means, it creates only fear within a child as a means for knowing where his or her boundaries are. As adults, such children will understand only "power" relationships, and will be better equipped to understand dominance and submission than cooperation and dialogue;

iv) that the parent is the ultimate entity in the family and the adult the ultimate in society. In contrast, she would say that the child is an equal based on Christ's own words. In the end, parents should be prepared to sacrifice time to work out and use non-violent means of discipline, even though children need not control their parents lives.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³Muriel Duncan, "Dark Secrets: The Abuse of Our Children" The United Church Observer (August 1985), pp. 20-5.

¹⁴⁴How radical this is can be seen in the responses to Muriel Duncan's work, published in subsequent issues of The United Church Observer. They were less than wholeheartedly in support of her position with respect to the parent-child relationship.

c) Restructuring theology

James Poling's work with offenders and their families has had an enormous impact on his life and on his belief system.¹⁴⁵ From the perspective of these people, he has begun to develop a new way of looking at scripture and of viewing the god of Christianity.¹⁴⁶ He offers five principles, derived from his work with offenders and their families that will begin the task of stopping sexual violence against children.¹⁴⁷ The first one is *Church and society must be reorganized so that victims have adequate resources for prevention and the healing from sexual violence.* Second, *Church and society must devise more effective accountability to challenge the ways men use and abuse power.* The third principle states that *Church and society must revise their institutional policies and procedures to prevent abuse of power and sexual violence.* Fourth, *Church and society must examine assumptions about the family, about the devaluation of women, and about sexuality and violence.* The last principle is reserved for the Christian church. *The church must reformulate the images of God that sometimes give latent sanction to abusive patterns in families and interpersonal relationships.* Furthermore, his work with sexual assault issues has led him to

¹⁴⁵Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 49-52, and "Issues in the Psychotherapy of Child Molesters" Journal of Pastoral Care 43(1989), pp. 25-32.

¹⁴⁶Poling, Abuse of Power, p. 181.

¹⁴⁷Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 183-6.

revise his earlier definition and method for practical theology.¹⁴⁸

His definition, based on the research for this project states

Practical theology is theological interpretation of the unheard voices of personal and community life for the purpose of continual transformation of faith in the true God of love and power toward renewed ministry practice.¹⁴⁹

He concludes by stating that practical theology is based on empirical and personal epistemology. This practical theology, based on reflections of what he has learned from his work on sexual assault, has resulted in a transformation of his life, his ministry and his view of God.

Summary

There seems to be a singular lack of interest in religion in much of the sexual material on child sexual abuse as there is a lack of interest in child abuse issues in the psychology of religion material. Data concerning prevalence issues indicates that there is a serious problem of incest in Christian homes, but the scope of the problem is not delineated except by Peters and Martin, clinicians who see it as a major problem for Christians. However, they do not discuss how the problem relates to the basic belief structure in Christianity. Family profiles are similar to the findings of the secular material with the exception that

¹⁴⁸Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 186-91.

¹⁴⁹Poling, Abuse of Power, p . 187.

biological fathers rather than stepfathers are the offenders.¹⁵⁰ There is a strong tendency to focus on keeping the families together. Causes of sexual assault are Satan, our fallen natures, the lack of information about sex (only Marie Fortune suggests that the fundamental structures of sexuality in Christianity lay at the heart of sexual violence). The patriarchal structure of Christianity with its misogynist and authoritarian structure is seen as a root cause of abuse, as is the extreme separation of male and females in fundamentalist Christian homes. Only one author critiques the image of the Christian god in biblical literature as a problematic cause for the sexual abuse of children. The solutions offered relate to keeping the family together under a form of benign paternalism or just the opposite, a revisioning of the family as a covenantal relationship where the covenant can be remade or severed if the conditions of a loving, caring relationship are not met. This involves reshaping the attitudes towards parental authority and what it means. What is clear in this review is that there is a problem with father-daughter incest and child sexual abuse among Christian family, nuclear or extended. Outside of the courageous thinking of James Poling, there are only limited ideas of exactly what to do about it.

The next chapter will analyze the biblical literature on father-daughter incest and will discuss the story of an eleven-

¹⁵⁰There is no way to tell whether the Christian prohibition against divorce, which keeps many battered Christian women in their marriages, has an impact on these findings. Nor is there any indication in the literature on whether these fathers molested children outside the home.

year-old child, Maria Goretti, who was killed while resisting sexual assault and was later made a saint as a model for Christian children.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHOSE FANTASY IS THIS?

The Biblical and Traditional Context of Incest

Therapists were not the first or only group to legitimize incest or disregard its victims. ... The responsibility for seduction is placed on the children in Genesis 19:30-36: "And the first born said to the younger ... 'Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve the seed of our father...'" This passage has been notably absent from commentaries by fundamentalists, who insist that the Bible speaks literal truths. How likely is it that this alleged seduction was planned by the children? Just whose fantasy does this sound like¹

Introduction

Any discussion of an issue such as the psycho-social context of father-daughter incest in a Christian environment must begin with an analysis of the biblical position on the subject. The Christian tradition is founded on the bible, which is considered to be the primary source of revelation for this religion and the foundation for all Christian teaching, tradition and theology.

Traditionally, Christian theological writings about incest do not reflect an interest in the problem of the sexual use of children. The problem of incest, if a concern, is subsumed under

¹See Blume's commentary on Lot and his daughters. E. Sue Blume, Secret Survivors: Uncovering Incest and Its Aftereffects in Women (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990), p. 21.

the problem of properly sanctified marriages.² The general prohibitions against incest include, of course, far wider prohibitions than that of the sexual relationship between father and daughter and other immediate family members. However, in the broader context, these prohibitions cannot be considered to be about marriage but about sexual intercourse since homosexuality and bestiality are also condemned. This anachronistic use of the Christian sense of marriage is a constant in the material from Christian sources, where all forms of kinship relations are considered in relation to the interdiction of certain marriages. The equation, 'sexual relationship equals marriage' has for centuries been the backbone of Christian thinking on the matter of

²Incest could be found to be of concern to both Jewish and Christian authors. The fear of incest led to the second class status of foundlings, that is, children who had been abandoned by their parents and children of outsiders such as prostitutes. Since one could not be sure who the parents of these children were, the possibility of breaking the incest prohibitions was great. For example, the rabbis stated that foundlings cannot marry into the four highest genealogical classes because of danger of incest (T. Kiddushin 4.1 (73a)). Another example from Christian sources used the possibility of committing incest with a previously abandoned child or sibling - since many abandoned children ended up in the brothels - as a reason why men should not frequent brothels (Tertullian, Apology 9). This concern continued well into the middle ages, when a practice of leaving tokens with an abandoned child was one method of averting the possibility of incest. John Boswell, The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988). Christian theology eventually took incest prohibitions to the seventh degree, then drew them back to the fourth degree. James A. Brundage, Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). David Herlihy, "Making Sense of Incest: Women and the Marriage Rules of the Early Middle Ages" in Bernard S. Bachrach and David Nicholas, eds, Law, Custom, and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe, Studies in Medieval Culture (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1990), pp. 1-16.

sex.³ Intercourse outside the sacrament of marriage is considered a sin.⁴ If all sexual relationships outside the marriage are a sin,⁵ then it can be argued that there is no qualitative difference between sexual relationships between adults and children and between adults and adults, no qualitative difference between consensual and non-consensual sexual relationships.⁶ An example of

³This is also the context of much anthropological writing with reference to kinship structures.

⁴Marriage implies sexual intercourse, and the assumption of many people is that marriage was monogamous at all times within the biblical tradition, with the exception of the patriarchs. However, it is quite clear that this was not so and the rules and regulations regarding concubines and servants are not always clear. One could not have intercourse, for example, with one of one's female servants who was betrothed. Does this carry with it the implication that one could have intercourse otherwise? The answer here, if custom bears a relationship to theory, is yes. The 'droit du seigneur' extended into the middle ages and later. On Tobit and rights of the lord, see Uta Ranke-Heineman Eunuchs for Heaven: The Catholic Church and Sexuality, trans. John Brownjohn (London: Andr Deutsch, 1990) and Brundage, Law, Sex. Even more strange was the idea that any sexual behaviour outside of male-female intercourse, e.g. masturbation, was a greater sin than adultery. See James Nelson, Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979) and John T. Noonan, Jr., Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

⁵The alternate structure of Christian marriage which views marriage as a covenant does not make any distinction between adults and children, although it may affect thinking on subjects such as divorce. An interesting practical application of this problem is illustrated in the story of Abigail Abbot Bailey. When she sued her husband for divorce and support, it was on the basis of adultery, although the 'other partner' and triggering impulse for the divorce action was the incestuous assault of Abigail's husband on their sixteen-year-old daughter. Ann Taves, ed., Religion and Domestic Violence in Early New England: The Memoirs of Abigail Abbot Bailey. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁶M. Fortune, Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981).

the kind of excuse this can engender is to be found in Jean Renvoise's book on incest. She notes the following statement from a devout Christian father who had been sexually abusing his daughter over a number of years:

... for some of these religious people all sex is sin, it's all bad, so what the hell difference does it make what you do? Screwing mummy when she's on birth control is just as much sin as screwing your 11-year-old daughter.⁷

Biblical Scholarship and Social Issues

Biblical scholarship is known for its dryness and its attempts at 'value free' scholarship. The debate is ongoing and can be seen in many publications. The question is whether it can continue to avoid dealing with the larger questions of the cultural implications of, not only the biblical material we have at hand, but also the analyses and interpretations that biblical scholars put onto the texts which come from their own presuppositions and biases.⁸ This is usually noticed when people take what they are given literally for uses unacceptable to the society at large but

⁷Jean Renvoise, Incest: A Family Pattern (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 86.

⁸The spectre of Abraham as the first recorded 'pimp' is one which does not seem to tickle the fancy of biblical scholars. See Genesis 20. Kevin Harris, Sex, Ideology and Religion: The Representation of Women in the Bible (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984). My joking suggestion that Abimelech was probably Isaac's biological father has also been met with that stolid 'what do you mean look?' from fellow biblical scholars. Read Genesis 20-21 as a continuous story. For a discussion of the debate as it relates to biblical, value free scholarship, see E. P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

is as true for socially sanctioned values.⁹ Social location for a text, one of the more recent interests in biblical scholarship, will not help much unless there is a larger dissemination of scholarly material and the relativity that it gives to biblical material. There must be some kind of wider accountability for biblical scholars such as that called for by the SBL presidential address of Schussler-Fiorenza in 1987.¹⁰

A problem in arguing for the importance of biblical material in the organisation of a Christian worldview is that on the one hand the twentieth century has seen a decline in the relevance of biblical texts as authoritative for even Christian theological thinking.¹¹ This leads to a disengagement from the importance of the primary texts of revelation of Christianity in the overall construction of worldviews without an actual dismissal of the texts as less than authoritative or revelatory. The failure to understand the historical importance of the biblical norms for the construction of ethical and legal norms in western societies, not only makes it difficult to understand how our society has

⁹Both sides of the debates over capital punishment, war, abortion, etc. manage to use the bible as authority. See Willard M. Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation (Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1983).

¹⁰Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Interpretation: De-centering Biblical Scholarship" JBL 107(1988), pp. 3-17.

¹¹H. G. Reventlow, The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World (Gottingen: Vanderhock and Reprecht, 1980), trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1984) with additional material supplied by author.

developed, but also why certain structures are so hard to change.¹² On the other hand, there is the extreme scholasticism or literalism that is attached to the interpretation and authority of the bible by fundamentalist, evangelical and similar wings of all the Christian denominations who believe in the inerrancy of scripture.¹³

A further problem for any study of biblical material is that while the scholar may be seeking a wider context for biblical texts and stories, the pastoral use of the biblical material and the lay use of the same material is, more often than not, that of the isolated use of a particular verse or set of verses for exhortatory purposes. Kevin Harris uses this approach in his discussion of the representations of women in the bible. He justifies this type of analysis because it is the way the majority of readers of the bible and Christian believers use the material. He argues, therefore, that this form of research analysis has a valid place in the study of the influence of the bible on society in general and on people's worldviews.¹⁴

Harris' point is well taken when children's exposure to the

¹²Reventlow, Authority, Brundage, Law, Sex and Christian Society.

¹³J. B. Rogers and D. K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), James Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978) and James Barr, Escape From Fundamentalism (London: SCM Press, 1984).

¹⁴Harris, Sex, Ideology and Religion, introduction, James Poling, The Abuse of Power: A Theological Issue (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), p. 155, n.4.

bible is discussed.¹⁵ The use of biblical material for the edification and education of children on moral and social issues can be problematic. Often the biblical material is divorced from the theological norms of the adult 'liberal' Christian position. This creates a disjuncture between the original material and the impact it had on the development of the child and the adult's present Christian thinking. Biblical stories and the biblical art attached to the stories and children's understanding of them are literal. To ignore this in attempting to discuss the authority of the bible is to ignore an important area of explanation. Biblical scholarship and Christian theology may be a way of hiding the 'sins of the fathers' by contextualizing them.¹⁶

Unlike the question of homosexuality and Christianity, the question of 'appropriate' sexual behaviour between adults and children has no directives in the Bible. From the myths of Genesis and the law codes of Leviticus to texts in the New Testament, it is clear that homosexuality, at least between males, is an 'abomination before the Lord'. These texts give a clear focus to

¹⁵David Heller, The Children's God (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), Robert Coles, The Spiritual Life of Children (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1990).

¹⁶An example is the Akedah, the story of the sacrifice of Isaac by his father, Abraham which became a topos for the relationship of the Christian god and Jesus. See Alice Miller's latest book for a very interesting discussion of the depiction of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham in art. She notes the complete lack of sensitivity to the plight of the victim Isaac and his feelings. The Untouched Key: Tracing Childhood Trauma in Creativity and Destructiveness, (New York: Doubleday, 1990), pp. 137-46. See Poling's discussion of this episode as part of his look at the role of Yahweh in Abraham's family story. Abuse of Power, pp. 158-64.

questions concerning the debate on homosexuality in the moral theology of Christianity.¹⁷ Having texts to work with gives rise to much research, historical, literary-critical and sociological, for example, with the result that there has been much discussion about the nature of the human being and sexual norms between adults. It also makes it easier to focus on the long term impact of these texts on the construction of attitudes in western society.¹⁸ For example, the apparent homosexual sin which Ham committed on his father Noah and caused his banishment was used as a religious justification for the slavery of Africans.¹⁹ The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has even left a legacy on the language.

By comparison, the sexual assault of women and domestic violence against women still play a minimal role in debates on morality, but even here one can find biblical texts on which to hinge a discussion and debate whether to maintain the status quo, to attempt to change it, and how to change it.²⁰ Feminist

¹⁷John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), James Nelson, Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology (Minneapolis Minn: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), Andre Guindon, Sexual Language: An Essay in Moral Theology (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977).

¹⁸Bruce Mills, The Construction of Homosexuality in Christian Tradition and its Influence on the Meaning of AIDS: A Psychological Study. PhD Dissertation, Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1990.

¹⁹Gen. 9:20-27. Swartley, Slavery, p.33. Note its use in such popular media as the film, Mississippi Burning.

²⁰Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View" in Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds, Womenspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 25-42, S. B. Thistlewaite, "Battered Women and the Bible: From

scholarship on questions of the place of women in the Christian biblical tradition have shown that women are treated as property and fall under the rubric of the theology of ownership, which is part of the all-pervasive patriarchal structure of the society inherent in the text.²¹

Children belong in the same category as women. The role of children within the biblical tradition receives little discussion. An oft-quoted passage from the gospel of Matthew indicates one strong position: that children are to be treated with respect and care:

Whosoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.... See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. Matt. 18:5-6, 10²²

One can extrapolate from this passage that children must be raised so that they will do good and not evil. There is no idea here that

subjection to liberation" Christianity and Crisis (November 1981), pp. 308-13, S. B. Thistlethwaite, "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Biblical Interpretation" in Letty M. Russell, ed., Feminist Interpretation of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 96-110, Marie Fortune, Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980), and Vicky Whipple, "Counseling Battered Women From Fundamentalist Churches" Journal of Marital and Family Therapy 13(1987), pp. 251-58.

²¹Carole R. Bohn, "Dominion to Rule: The Roots and Consequences of a Theology of Ownership" in Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds, Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), pp. 105-116 and Pamela J. Milne, "The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture" Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 5(1988), pp. 17-34.

²²All biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

children are born 'sinners' but rather adults that cause children to sin. However, there are qualifiers. The first is found in 'children or little ones who believe in me'. Clearly this can be read as excluding children who are not believers in Jesus or, in twentieth century terms, children who are not Christians. Does this make it all right to abuse children who are not Christian? Secondly, what is meant by the term 'sin' in this context? Could sin only relate to causing the child to cease to believe in the Christian God? Thirdly, does this make parents and other adults members of the Christian community fully responsible for the actions of their community or only the individual who causes the child to sin? Should the community take any action when children are abused in a manner which may cause them to 'sin'? Another biblical quote used to show how god protects his children and wants his children to be knowledgeable about issues of sexual assault is Hosea 4:6.²³ This reads "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.(KJV)" It should be noted that even here God makes the children suffer for the sins of the parents. What does a child sexually assaulted by her father find here? Further proof that her God has abandoned her! If she figures out that her father has broken God's law then it is clear that God has forgotten her. Whatever the answers to

²³Dr. William Katz, Parents Teaching Guide to Protecting Your Children From Sexual Assault (Toronto: Little Ones Books, 1984) p. 8.

these questions are, the reality in cases of child sexual abuse would indicate that the child is not the first responsibility of the community.

However, in father-daughter incest cases where the family is Christian, it might be thought that the father should receive clear condemnation. To the contrary, as in the non-Christian world, it is more often the child who is blamed and ostracised and the adult community that closes ranks to protect itself, even to the extent of forgiving the abuser and supporting him against his accuser(s), the daughter(s). The father who sexually abuses his daughter often uses the excuse such as he are only teaching his daughter about sexual relationships. He will also argue that learning about sex from a caring person is for her own good and furthermore, it didn't cause her any harm. As a consequence, he would not see this passage as relating to himself, because he does not see himself as causing his daughter, 'who believes in him', any harm.

The Bible and Father-Daughter Incest

There are no texts that sanction the sexual use of children by adults: however, neither is there any clear condemnation of the practice. It is generally assumed that the father-daughter incest taboo is universal.²⁴ Yet it is commonplace to read among both secular and Christian commentators on sexual abuse that there is no

²⁴Joseph Shepherd, Incest: A Biosocial View (New York: Academic Press, 1983). W. Arens, The Original Sin: Incest and Its Meaning (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

condemnation of father-daughter sexual relationships in Leviticus 18 or in the Old Testament even though Leviticus 18:6 does contain a general all-embracing taboo of sexual relationships among those of close blood ties. Furthermore, while the sexual use of boys by adult males would fall under the general condemnation of homosexuality, the sexual use of female children can only be discussed in the context of the father's rights to dispose of females as he wishes.

Incest can be categorized in many different ways. Although we are focusing on the father-daughter incest in particular, other forms of incest are apparent in the biblical texts. In particular, there are many instances of sibling incest in the Old Testament. In a literal interpretation of Genesis, it must be assumed that the children of Adam and Eve committed sibling incest out of necessity - there being no other human beings supposedly in existence (Gen. 4:17-5:5). If one accords literal belief to the story of the flood, then the grandchildren of Noah must also, of necessity, have married within close affinity - endogamic kinship lines, which are also forbidden under the incest rules of Lev. 18 (cf. Genesis 7:23b; 9:18-19). Furthermore, Abraham and Sarah were half brother and half sister according to one story.

The story of the rape of Tamar by her half-brother, Amnon, in II Sam. 13:1-22 has been discussed at length in Phyllis Trible's Texts of Terror.²⁵ The focus of the problem as described in the

²⁵Phyllis Trible, Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 37-64.

bible is on how this rape will effect the male protagonists, and this is the focus of centuries of biblical scholarship as well. This highlights the vulnerable position of women in a patriarchal society and will be underscored in the discussion of Lot and his daughters below.

The only discussion of incest in the New Testament is by Paul in Corinthians(I Cor. 5:1-8).²⁶ However, the moral concern of the Corinthians passage has to do with community concerns and correct behaviour between adults, a man and his father's wife, presumably the stepmother. The penalty for the commission of this sin is expulsion from the community. In the case of this community in Corinth, the man was still a member and therefore the community itself was also guilty of sin and must take remedial action.²⁷

There are only two direct passages in the biblical texts in which father-daughter incest plays a role. It could be argued that Adam committed incest with Eve, since she was born from his flesh

²⁶Paul's attitude towards sexuality had a marked ascetic tinge to it that was influenced by his apocalyptic expectation of Jesus' imminent return. His pronouncements on sex (better to marry than to burn) and its origins in the sexual sin of Adam and Eve have had an enduring legacy on Christianity. However, since I am looking at children in the thesis, it is the biblical pronouncements that are important and there are no texts that could be easily read as referring to the situation of a sexually abused daughter in a Christian home. See Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (New York: Vintage books, 1988), John A. Phillips, Eve: the History of an Idea (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), Harris, Sex, Ideology and Religion, A. Stothert Haydock, The Eve Paradigm: A Feminist Perspective, M.A. Thesis (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1985).

²⁷William E. Orr and James Arthur Walther, I Corinthians The Anchor Bible, #32 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 184-89.

and, therefore, was his daughter.²⁸ However, this association is not that obvious, nor is it one that is ever implied in what is taught.²⁹ The first text of concern is the case of father-daughter incest between Lot and his daughters; the second is the lack of a distinct separate prohibition of father-daughter incest in Leviticus 18.

Lot and His Daughters

The story of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19:30-38 is the first story to detail a case of father-daughter incest. Lot's daughters had intercourse with their father in order to preserve his line after their mother died because of her disobedience to the orders of God. Lot had already offered these unmarried virgin daughters to the men of Sodom instead of the strange male visitors prior to its destruction. This text has been used in various ways through the centuries to wage war against homosexuality and against inhospitality. Seldom has there been any condemnation of Lot for offering his virgin daughters to the men of Salem for their sexual

²⁸See Edmund Leach, Genesis as Myth and other essays (London: Cape, 1969), Arens, Original Sin.

²⁹However, note the pictorials around Adam and Eve in which Eve looks like a prepubescent female, while Adam is bearded and clearly a man. See my discussion of this in Sheila A. Redmond, "Christian Virtues and Recovery From Child Sexual Assault" in Brown and Bohn, Christianity, pp. 76-77. Cf. The Maryknoll Sisters, Crusade: the Bible Retold for Catholic Children, No. 2, (Chicago: John J. Crawley & Co., Inc., 1955), pp. 46-7. In the reconstruction of the Sodom and Gomorrah story, this bible for children ends the story when Lot's wife has turned into a pillar of salt. No. 5, pp. 97-8.

use and pleasure. The story of Lot and his daughters must be read against the backdrop of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is an addendum to the story and can be read in several ways, part of whose purpose is to explain the relationship of the Moabites and the Ammonites to the Israelites.³⁰ Seldom has the question of the breaking of the incest taboo been discussed. When it is, the overall tenor of the discussion is to point out how blameless Lot was in the whole affair. Speiser, in his commentary on Genesis, refers to this story as a fable. He places the daughters' behaviour in that of an end-of-the-world scenario with Lot as the only male left with whom the daughters can procreate.³¹ He then makes a point of the fact that Lot was too drunk to know what was going on. The assumption is that Lot would never have committed incest if he had been in full possession of his faculties.

Herman Gunkel argues that the original hearers of the story in its oral form would have found pleasure and delight in the trickery used by Lot's daughters in having the courage to use this means of insuring that they have children. The absolution of Lot from responsibility for the incest, he argues, was a later interpretation by a redactor in order to try to eliminate the questionable offensive ethical features - at least in relation to

³⁰J. Bright, A History of Israel, third edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981) p. 90, E. A. Speiser, Genesis, Anchor Bible Series, #19 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 145-6.

³¹See story of Tamar, who seduces her father-in-law, Judah, when she is refused her levitical rights in order to continue her dead husband's line. Gen. 38:1-30.

Lot - by saying that he was drunk and deceived by his daughters.³² Other analyses of the story see it as part of the Abraham cycle or saga. Here Lot is shown as a 'buffoon' compared to the saintly Abraham. He is not even man enough to avoid being taken advantage of by his daughters.³³

Even stranger still is the use of the story of Lot's daughters' intercourse with their father for the purposes of maintaining the family line since they could no longer hope to find husbands. Origen stated that this case of father-daughter incest was not to be condemned outright. Instead, he compared it to the sinful behaviour of married couples who have sexual intercourse without the express purpose of procreation.³⁴ Uta Ranke-Heinemann notes that "the notion that it is better to make children with one's own father than to avoid making them with one's husband was destined to enjoy a long post-Augustinian career."³⁵ Furthermore, the story makes it clear that the daughters instigated the incest and actually had to get their father drunk in order to consummate the relationship and thus releases the father of any responsibility in the sexual relationship.³⁶

³²H. Gunkel, The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History (NY: Schocken Books, 1975(1901)), pp. 111-113.

³³Mills. G. W. Coats, Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature (Grand rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1983) 114-115.

³⁴In Genesim homiliae, 5,4.

³⁵Eunuchs for Heaven, p. 40.

³⁶Kevin Harris makes this point in his analysis of women's role in the bible. Sex, Ideology and Religion, pp. 87-88.

Thus, we have the first use of the 'drunk' excuse for acts of family violence that resounds in case after case of incest, the sexual abuse of children, other forms of child abuse and wife battering.³⁷ If Lot doesn't make the excuse for himself, then the male commentators on Genesis will make it for him. Furthermore, the story argues that the end (maintaining the patriarchal line and procreation for the daughters) justifies the means (father-daughter incest). And the daughters are responsible for it and the father is absolved. Is it difficult to see how this story could be used by a Christian father to justify his sexual abuse of his daughter?

Leviticus 18: The Kinship Rules of Israel

The verse, Leviticus 18:17, has been a focus of some discussion with regards to incest. More than one writer has commented that there is no father/daughter incest prohibition in the Old Testament.³⁸ Even Christian writers assume that this is the case.³⁹ The passage reads

³⁷This is not the first use of the 'drunk' excuse to exculpate one of the patriarchs of morally reprehensible behaviour. Note the story discussed above of Noah and Ham. One could argue that the victim, the son Ham, is here also blamed for the father's behaviour. I have not discovered any analysis of this story similar to the treatment of Lot and his daughters.

³⁸Judith Herman, Father Daughter Incest (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), Florence Rush, The Best-Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980).

³⁹Michael Palmer, "Some Therapeutic Implications of a Sociological and Theological Consideration of Incest" Paper read at the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, May 3-6, 1984. Berg Recording Specialists, Dallas, Texas.

You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, and you shall not take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are your near kinswomen; it is wickedness. (RSV)

The passage is no different in the King James's Version of the bible, so one cannot accept that there is a mistranslation which may affect the discussion of more fundamentalist authors. The only translation problem that bears any relevance is that the word, ishah, in Hebrew means both woman and wife. By deciding to translate the word, ishah, as 'woman', this passage not only forbids sexual relations with one's own daughters but also with one's stepdaughters, granddaughters and step-granddaughters.⁴⁰ However, generally, commentators from the Christian ethos assume that this refers to children of the woman by another male, that is, a man's stepchildren.

The rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud, when discussing this passage, assumed that both biological father-daughter as well as stepfather-daughter sexual relationships were prohibited by this verse. However, Christian material seldom contains this inclusive understanding of the verse, preferring to view it from an exclusive point of view. In view of the fact that father-daughter incest is more prevalent than stepfather-stepdaughter incest in the Christian

⁴⁰No mention is ever made about sexual relations between a father and his sons. There is only a reference to no sexual relationships between a man and his father (Lev. 18:7) or uncle (Lev. 18:14). Homosexuality is clearly delineated as an abomination before the Lord at all times, as is bestiality (Lev. 18:22-23).

cases,⁴¹ does this exclusivist interpretation play some role in the weltanschauung which would account for this fact? Why has there been such a limited discussion of a text which could give an implicit permission for legalistically minded Christian fathers to sexually exploit their daughters? Does the mindset that sees Lev. 18:17 as only related to stepfamilies (and one which is then repeated by feminist authors such as Florence Rush and Judith Herman) play a role in the prevalence of this kind of abuse in our society?

These kinds of misunderstandings are certainly a product of not reading carefully or not reading the primary sources at all⁴² and most importantly the way in which the subject is treated in the secondary sources. The Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, in its short discussion of incest states:

Incest - Carnal intercourse is treated as criminal when between a man and his mother, step-mother, half-sister, grand-daughter, step-sister, aunt, wife of an uncle, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, step-daughter, step-

⁴¹V. E. Gil, "In Thy Father's House: Self-Report Findings of Sexually Abused Daughters From Conservative Christian Homes" Journal of Psychology and Theology 6:2(1988), pp. 144-52, David Peters, A Betrayal Of Innocence: What Everyone Should Know About Child Sexual Abuse (Waco, Texas: World Books Publisher, 1986). See previous chapter on prevalence.

⁴²If the reference is to Deuteronomy 27:20-23, some small case can be made. However, diligent scholars who read a concordance or commentary would be referred from this passage to the more all-encompassing passage in Leviticus.

grand-daughter (Lev.18⁶⁻¹⁸); or his mother-in-law (Dt 27²⁰⁻²¹). Mention of an own sister is omitted as too gross to consider.⁴³

One wonders about Hasting's editing of this passage. Lev. 18:9 states clearly "You shall not uncover the nakedness of thy sister, ..." (RSV). The passage further stipulates stepsisters as forbidden sexual partners whether born at home or abroad. There is no mention of lack of a father/daughter incest prohibition.

If there was anyone left out, which is difficult to find (for example, Lev. 18:20 even forbids sexual intercourse with a neighbour's wife), the blanket covering in Lev. 18:6, "None of you shall approach any one near of kin to him to uncover nakedness. I am the Lord" could be considered definitive.

One explanation in some of the commentaries for the 'lack' of father-daughter prohibition is that there was a lacuna in Lev. 18:10 which prohibits father-granddaughter sexual relations. Textual emendations are suggested but not incorporated into the text, neither is the problem referred to in, for example, the Oxford Annotated Bible, nor the Jerome Biblical Commentary. If it is true that the prohibition was accidentally dropped during transmission, it must have happened very early since it was already missing when the rabbis were discussing the problem in the Talmud.

Yet this understanding that Leviticus does not taboo explicitly or to some extent even implicitly father/daughter sex is

⁴³J. Poucher, "Crimes and Punishments," in James Hasting, ed., A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I (New York: Charles, Scribner's Sons, 1903), 521b.

one which seems to have had a lengthy history and impact on the legal system. For example, in Reynolds and Tanner

The laws of Georgia hold that the prohibitions of consanguineous marriages are dependent on the Levitical code, and therefore do not explicitly prohibit a man from marrying his daughter or his niece, while prohibiting nephew-aunt marriages⁴⁴

In fact, the preoccupation of the legal codes of the Pentateuch seems to be with questions of liability in rape and loss of virginity cases.⁴⁵ The problem of loss of virginity of a daughter in the Old Testament entails specific penalties and results. If a daughter is found not to contain the 'tokens of virginity' when she becomes a wife, she will be stoned to death (Deut. 22:20-1).⁴⁶ The daughter is the property of the father and is valuable intact as a virgin.⁴⁷ This law itself may have been a

⁴⁴Vernon Reynolds and Ralph Tanner, The Biology of Religion (New York: Longman Inc., 1983), p. 124. Cf. M. G. Farrow and R. C. Juberg, "Genetics and laws prohibiting marriage in the United States" Journal of the American Medical Association 209(1969), pp. 534-8.

⁴⁵This may have had some impact in Judaism. However, Christian new covenant theology complicates the relationship of the Old Testament law to Christianity where the Pauline view of the new law and its supercession of the old law has had a continuing impact on Christian thinking.

⁴⁶However, the Mishnah gives some relief to women. In M.Ket. 1:6-9, it is stated that a woman can claim that the loss of virginity was not through any fault of her own and therefore, if proven, she cannot be punished.

⁴⁷This is interesting to consider when placed next to Gil's findings that while biological fathers are more apt to sexual abuse of their daughters, they are less likely to attempt intercourse than are stepfathers in the Christian families studied. See pp. 73-4, above. Considering that the profile of the sexually abusive father is one of a legalistic, moralistic, authoritarian type, does the lack of clear legal interdiction of father-daughter incest actually have a further impact?

major inhibitor to father-daughter incest, making the writing of a specific taboo unnecessary, at least in Israelite and Jewish society.⁴⁸ If she is raped, the man who raped her must pay her, marry her and cannot ever divorce her.⁴⁹ Even when there is clear protection for a daughter against, for example, being forced into prostitution, the reasons have to do less with concern over the daughter's welfare than with the welfare of the society.⁵⁰ However there would appear that there is biblical sanction for giving one's daughter to others for sexual use in the service of safety of family or of guests.⁵¹ Furthermore, fathers could sell their daughters into slavery (Ex. 21:7) and, unlike an Israelite male who could only be held as a slave for six years, the female was a slave for life, as were any children she produced while a slave.

The problem of whether or not father-daughter incest is tabooed in the Leviticus sexual codes may seem superfluous or incidental to the issue. Daughters may not read Leviticus, fathers may not read Leviticus.⁵² However, literally-minded Christians,

⁴⁸See data on lack of father-daughter incest in her Jewish sample in Diana E. H. Russell, Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women (New York: Basic Books, 1986), pp. 114, 249-250.

⁴⁹One could say that this is small consolation to the woman who was raped - to be trapped forever to an abusive man.

⁵⁰"Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land become full of wickedness." Lev. 19:29.

⁵¹Lot's offer of his daughters to replace the strangers in the Sodom story.

⁵²In a play, "Under the Skin," which revolves around the abduction, rape and murder of a 10 year-old child, the male perpetrator of these acts cites Moses as the justification for the

who use the bible as normative for the rules of sexual intercourse, will not find the necessary taboo. Like the authors of the Georgia law on incest, they can hold that there is no religious interdiction against the practice, and for those whose lives are based on strict legalism, no rules means the behaviour is acceptable. For a daughter, the negative feelings about the sexual relationship and the betrayal could easily be held to be unacceptable.

Partial Summary

In neither of these cases would I be willing to argue that the Lot story or the sexual code are used specifically by a Christian incest father who sexually abuses his daughter - primarily because the question, if asked of these fathers, has not been noted in the clinical material. What I would argue is that the writers and interpreters of these biblical passages set the tone for patriarchal assumptions and concerns about what is important. And what is not important is the emotional ramifications of the sexual abuse of daughters in the analysis.⁵³ What then are children left

rape of the child. Betty Lambert, Jennie's Story and Under the Skin (Toronto: Playwrights Canada, 1987), p. 179. Lambert's play, "Jennie's Story" involves the seduction and sterilisation of a fifteen year-old girl by a Roman Catholic priest and its long term repercussions.

⁵³The story of Japhtheth's daughter and her feelings are tellingly retold in Phyllis Tribble's, Texts of Terror, pp. 93-116. Her focus on the unrecorded feelings of the daughter should give some reflection on the nature of the narrative preoccupations of the biblical writer.

with from these stories and the interpretations given them?

In summary, there is not much that might indicate any understanding of the damage that father-daughter sexual relations might have on the daughter. The predominant concern is with father-right, procreation and legalities. While one might argue that this is part of the nature of the texts from myth to law codes, a concern for the feelings of the daughter is found nowhere else in the sacred texts of Christianity.⁴

What impact these biblical passages have, of course, depends on how closely a particular Christian group relies on the authority of the bible to determine human behaviour. The classical and modern biblicists often avoid the ethical consequences of these passages. They would argue that this is not the concern of historians. Just as there was a way for Lot to avoid responsibility and the broader social consequences of his behaviour, so there is for the modern scholar. But the story of Lot and his daughters tells us a great deal about the plight of

⁴Furthermore, the idea that there are ethical issues surrounding incest - particularly adult-child incest - has received almost no attention in secondary texts. For instance, in a recent dictionary of Christian ethics, under 'Incest', the explanation of the term is totally without reference to anything Christian or even biblical. There is not even a reference to the incest prohibitions in Leviticus (p. 295). Under 'Sexual Ethics' there is one reference to incest under Paul's forbidden categories in I Cor. 5:1. In the cross-reference list, there is no reference to incest (p. 581). Under 'Abortion', incest is mentioned as a reason for broader support for abortion, since an incest pregnancy is the result of a clear injustice to the mother, as is pregnancy resulting from rape (p. 5). Note how 'incest' is separated from 'rape.' The section on 'Pederasty' or paedophilia has an entry as clinical as the entry on incest (pp. 461-2). James F. Childress and John Macquarrie, eds, The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986).

women and daughters and their roles in the world of the patriarchs, and inevitably about the world of today. In the final analysis, what this means is that there really is nothing specifically in the biblical texts that would begin to address the negative impact of a father's sexual assault on the daughter in a Christian family.

The Tradition and Social Issues

Identifying the underlying and constant ideas and images that make violence against women possible and even, in the eyes of some, legitimate, enables us to speak against these ideas wherever we find them - in the home, in institutions, in the media, in churches and in synagogues.⁵⁵

The social context for women within the traditional structures of Christianity is often one where violence and sex are closely entwined. The problem of violence against women, which includes the sexual abuse of a daughter by her father, and its Christian roots is long standing and one that has been supported by the church and its teaching.

One of the areas where the linkage of sex with violence in Christianity can be seen is in the stories of the female Christian saints. Saints function as models, ideals or inspirations for

⁵⁵M. Miles, "Violence Against Women in the Historical Christian West and in North American Secular Culture: in the Visual and Textual Evidence" in C. Atkinson, C. H. Buchanan and M. A. Miles, eds., Shaping New Vision: Gender and Values in American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 26.

others. They are created by and for other people.⁵⁶ Their behaviour and relationship to the Christian god is to be emulated. They may also reflect the very real condition and the longings of the people who believe in them.⁵⁷ Violence against these women, often sexual in nature, forms the backdrop of the stories of these women as they met the requirements that led to martyrdom and sainthood. The violence of the stories includes, not only violence perpetrated from the outside, but also stories of self-abuse. These women hurt themselves, starve themselves, vomit if forced to eat food. In fact, they often show many of the symptoms associated with sexually abused females, not that this is included in their histories.⁵⁸ The one thing they had, which is often missing

⁵⁶Pierre Deloos, "Towards a sociological study of canonized sainthood in the Catholic Church," in Stephen Wilson, ed., Saints and Their Cults; Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 100-1700 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁵⁷Weinstein and Bell, Saints. Pierre Deloos suggests that "... in truth, all saints, more or less appear to be constructed in the sense that being necessarily saints in consequence of a reputation created by others and a role others expect of them, they are remodelled to correspond to collective mental representations." Deloos, in Weinstein and Bell, Saints, p. 9.

⁵⁸The possibility is suggested, however, in some of the stories of the saints from the middle ages. Rudolph M. Bell, Holy Anorexia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), G. P. Corrington, "Anorexia, Asceticism, and Autonomy: Self-Control as Liberation and Transcendence," JFSR 2:2(1984), pp. 51-62, for the view that anorexia and asceticism are similar and are both examples of how women take positive self-control over their lives. The problem with this article and analysis is found in the sentence "Despite the rise in the incidence of anorexia, it is still being described by many psychoanalysts as a pathology, a disorder requiring psychiatric as well as medical treatment"(p. 53). Does this mean that the Black Plague wasn't a disease because so many people had

outside the Roman Catholic tradition, is a contextual reason for these behaviours of hyperreligiosity that placed and still places a positive value on their actions.⁵⁹

The story of Maria Goretti is only one in a long line of the deification of women against whom acts of sexual violence have been perpetrated. Her story speaks to well-defined sexual parameters in

it? Or that child sexual abuse victims are only in need of medical treatment and not psychological treatment because there are so many victims (1 in 3 women) and therefore anything so widespread is normal and not in need of mental health help? Or is it that she is trying to equate anorexia with homosexuality, which was for a long time deemed a pathological state? Does she accept the argument that the end (some higher goal or union, from union with god to control over the self) justifies the means (the self-abuse of the body)? This would appear to be the case because she says that the road of anorectic martyrdom (my term) is more difficult in modern society because we view the behaviour as aberrant (p. 61). Besides, some women are anorexic in order to fit the ideal of society's thinness, not to belie it, an issue to which Corrington does not even refer. The problem, I would argue, is that the ideal that both the ascetic and the anorexic are striving for is still a male ideal even if, as she argues, women chose this method of reaching perfection for themselves (pp. 55-6). The problem is that modern anorexics (ascetics) don't have a higher spiritual goal (pp. 60-1). This adulation of self-destruction sounds very much like the Christian adulation of suffering for a higher purpose. Eradication of violence against women and children will not happen if models are made of women who are consumed by a 'holy hatred of themselves' (p. 61). Emphasis added.

⁵⁹Bell, Holy Anorexia. Weinstein and Bell, Saints and Society. Caroline Bynum's book on the symbolic significance of food for medieval women is an illuminating look at the rationale behind fasting and feasting in the lives of women saints. She argues that "women shaped for themselves complex, spiritually effective, and distinctive roles within the medieval church" and within their families through their control of food, both for themselves and in relation to others. While she does not feel that these are models of behaviour for twentieth century women, she does think that the richness of their symbolic expressions, their images and values is something that the modern world can use. Carole Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Famine: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 277-302.

the Roman Catholic system. She is an example of both a saint created by popular piety and one whose sanctification bore a political dimension.⁶⁰

Maria Goretti: her story

Born in 1890, Maria Goretti was an Italian peasant child who was raised as a devout Roman Catholic and received her first communion when she was eleven years old.⁶¹ Her father died when she was nine, and as the eldest of five children, she took over primary duty for the household while her mother worked in the fields alongside the Serenelli men, the family with whom they were living. Maria was eleven when she was assaulted by nineteen-year-old Alessandro Serenelli who lived in the same house and had already approached her sexually a number of times before the final assault. He threatened to kill her if she did not submit to him. She refused and was stabbed with a knife, receiving fourteen major

⁶⁰Susan Brownmiller places the beatification and sanctification of Maria Goretti within the context of the political and social realities in Italy after World War II. "Unlike the original virgin martyrs, Maria Goretti was a poverty-stricken child of the soil, a matter of some importance in the Vatican's effort to renew the faith of the laboring classes in postwar, politically turbulent Europe. ... Against the dissolution of (war and post-war) female morality stood the shining example of little Maria Goretti, who defended her Christian virtue by death and made a penitent of her attacker. Could there be a more perfect expression of woman's role?" S. Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men Women and Rape (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), pp. 332-3.

⁶¹There are many small details about the story of Maria that differ in the authors who write about her. The following discussion is based on the best reconstruction of the books.

wounds,⁶² and died almost twenty-four hours later of raging peritonitis in a hospital.⁶³ Serenelli was apprehended and given a life sentence for the murder because he had been under twenty-one when he killed her. After ten years in jail, he had a vision of Maria coming towards him bearing fourteen lilies in her arms and begging him to repent. He repented and asked forgiveness for his sin and was instrumental in the process of her canonization. He was released from jail in 1929. The myth-making elements of the story can be seen when a paper such as the New York Times stated that he was at the beatification ceremonies, others at the canonization ceremonies, a position often reiterated, although untrue.⁶⁴ In a biography of Serenelli based on lengthy personal interviews in the sixties, he himself stated that he did not go to the beatification out of respect for her family, he says nothing

⁶²The fourteen stab wounds would be represented in the iconography associated with Saint Maria by fourteen lilies.

⁶³M. C. Buerle, Saint Maria Goretti (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1950); J. Carr, c.s.s.r., Saint Maria Goretti: Martyr for Purity (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, Ltd, 1948); A. Ball, Modern Saints: Their Lives and Faces (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1983), pp. 163-73.

⁶⁴"Slayer Attends Girl's Beatification 45 Years After He murdered Her," New York Times, April 28, 1947, p. 25, "Oklahoma Bishops Oppose Capital Punishment," Origins 13(June 9, 1983), See Brownmiller, Against, p. 331. However, "going to the canonization would have broken his heart again," Helen W. Homan, "To Maria, Child Martyr of Our Time" Catholic World 173(May 1951), p. 125 and "Alessandro had the good sense not to come to the canonization," E. B. Strauss, "Maria Goretti (1890-1901)" in P. Caraman, S.J., ed., Saints and Ourselves: Personal Portraits of Favorite Saints by Twenty-four Outstanding Catholic Authors (New York: Image Books, 1953), p. 307.

about the canonization.⁶⁵

It is what happened in the hospital and subsequent to her death that turned her death into a celebration for Roman Catholic Christianity. Her canonization is explained in this manner by one author:

She had plenty of time to make a conscious decision between death and rape. People like Mary Goretti ... have an ever-present realization that lightly to surrender one's bodily integrity, even to the most compelling needs of the moment, upsets the whole rhythm of the universe.⁶⁶

She was canonized not as a suffering victim but as part of God's plan, because she refused to be violated, accepted being killed to avoid that violation - actual intercourse. She immediately forgave her assailant and was preeminently concerned about his soul, and her mother's well-being. In the following sections, the lessons to be learned from her life and death will be illustrated from varying Roman Catholic sources. While there are many different points which could also be made from the analysis of the Maria Goretti material, such as the elevation of poverty and the dangers of too much knowledge, the focus will be on the issues which are relevant to the questions raised by the material on father-daughter incest.

Maria Goretti: a relevant model for Catholic females

⁶⁵P. DiDonato, The Penitent (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1962), pp. 159-61, 172-3.

⁶⁶J. Coulson, ed., The Saints: A Concise Biographical Dictionary (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1960), p. 323.

It is surely in the designs of God to lead young women of to-day along the road of virtue - to teach and encourage them to prefer purity to pleasure, conscience to sin, the love of their Creator to the false love of a creature, the Creator's law to the caprice of the tempter, death - if need be - to dishonour, and to lead them under the banner ... of the little maiden of Corinaldo, not yet twelve, poor, unable to read or write, but able in the hour of temptation, at the cost of her life-blood, to say NO.⁶⁷

When Maria became a saint, she became a symbol and an ideal to be emulated by Catholic female children, her mother was an ideal Catholic mother and her assailant, a true penitent. The fact that Maria had died while being sexually assaulted and protecting her virginity was something that was exalted in the mind of Roman Catholics, and she became a model of the correct way of being good. Since her assault, murder, beatification and sanctification all occurred in the twentieth century, she is a part of the psyche of many contemporary Catholic women.⁶⁸ It was said that she was 'more real than Dag Hammersjöld.'⁶⁹ There were plays about her performed in convent schools and movies were made.⁷⁰ Churches were named for her and liturgies created around her story.⁷¹ There is no question

⁶⁷Carr, St. Maria Goretti, p. 69.

⁶⁸Fortune, Sexual Violence, Annie Imbens-Fransen and Ineke Jonker, Godsdienst en incest: de Horstink i.s.m. de Vereniging tegen Seksuele Kindermishandeling binnen het Gezin (Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1985).

⁶⁹Carole Rivers, Aphrodite at Mid-Century: Reflections of a Catholic Childhood (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1973), p. 154.

⁷⁰G. B. Guerri, Povera santa, povero assassino. La vera storia di Maria Goretti (Milan: Mondadori, 1985).

⁷¹Sr. Concepta, "St Maria Goretti and the Mass" Catholic School Journal, pp. 152-3.

of her authenticity since there are photographs of her family and possibly even of Maria, herself, as a very young child. She has a place in books for children and adults alongside people like Albert Schweitzer, Helen Keller, Thomas Aquinas, Ignatius Loyola, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Louis Pasteur and Florence Nightingale.⁷² Her sainthood and life story are still being used by the papacy to promote Christian values.⁷³ When a book highly critical of the sanctification of Maria Goretti was published in Italy,⁷⁴ the papacy set up a commission in order to refute the book's contentions and again validate the reasons for her canonization.⁷⁵

The case of Maria Goretti encapsulates and embodies one method of dealing with a victim of child sexual assault. The entire story

⁷²Mijn Sterren, P. Caraman, SJ., ed., Saints and Ourselves: Personal Portraits of Favorite Saints by Twenty-four Outstanding Catholic Authors (New York: Image Books, 1953).

⁷³John Paul II, "Homily delivered at the shrine of Saint Maria Goretti about faith in the Word of God", Sept. 1, 1979, OR(Eng.) 37:598(Sept. 10, 1979), pp. 4-5; "Address delivered to the young people of Catholic Action from Sengallia diocese on the modernness of Saint Maria Goretti's Message", Oct. 18, 1980, OR(Eng.) 47:659(Nov. 24, 1980), pp. 8-9; "'Evil is not in the body but in lack of respect for its dignity," Homily at Mass in the parish of Corpus Domini, Massemena, Italy discussing the virtue of chastity and respect of the body, Sept. 27, 1986, OR(Eng.) 42:959(Oct. 20, 1986), pp. 10-11; "Imitate Maria Goretti, an example of Christian fortitude", January 31, 1988, OR(Eng.) 8(February 22, 1988), p. 2; "Be true Christians! Never Hide!" January 31, 1988, OR(Eng.) 8(February 22, 1988), p. 3.

⁷⁴Guerri, Povera santa, povero assassino.

⁷⁵"Regarding a book published on St. Maria Goretti" Communiqué from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, OR(Eng.) 7:873(Feb. 11, 1985), p.; "A propos de la canonization de Maria Goretti" La Documentation Catholique 83(May 18, 1986), pp. 499-501.

was turned into a positive life-enhancing, transcendent, bigger-than-life experience. Her behaviour at the time, and her reaction to the assault and the subsequent interpretations of it, have become an example for others. It is this model that is of interest here. At her sanctification, the pope spoke of how she was a model for all Catholic girls, the Saint Agnes of the twentieth century.

How can we doubt that a wonderful Providence has been pleased to give to children in the new *Beata* and especially to ... Children of Mary ... a model and a heavenly protectress and advocate? She was one of themselves when she suffered a dreadful death for the law of God.⁷⁶

Maria became an example to be emulated: she had suffered, had forgiven her assailant and had defended her sexual purity. The following five sections focuses on issues relevant to the discussion of child sexual assault - responsibility for the assault, loss of virginity, suffering, forgiveness and the role of the Christian child as they are found in the use of Maria Goretti as a role model for the Catholic child.

a. Responsibility for sexual assault

There is only a limited condemnation of her assailant, Alessandro Serenelli. He was not damned, but like Judas Iscariot's necessary role in the crucifixion of Jesus, he was a necessary part

⁷⁶Pope Pius XII.

of the action which would result in Maria's canonization.⁷⁷ Maria's suffering had been destined by God and her assailant should be happy that he had occasioned the thing which had happened to her, i.e. her sainthood.⁷⁸

According to one Roman Catholic psychiatrist, Alessandro was not far from normal as other writers would argue⁷⁹ but had simply been endowed with a temperament that made him assault Maria, as would any other man under certain circumstances.

There is no reason to suppose that he was the monster of depravity that some pious commentators would like to make him out, for any hot-blooded man is, in certain circumstances, potentially a sex-murderer. Moreover, in the case of a man endowed with a certain kind of temperament, purity and innocence serve to stimulate rather than inhibit sexual desire. Even in these days of sexual 'enlightenment,' the average man likes to enjoy the fantasy of his wife having been virginal before marriage.⁸⁰

Or as another author put it: "From the time you were a tiny thing, a natural grace and a certain inborn refinement had caused a stranger to watch you with delight. So it is really no wonder,

⁷⁷"Better, far better for you all, had you never heard the name of Serenelli! And yet it was through that name that your glorious martyrdom was wrought." Homan, "To Maria," p. 121.

⁷⁸"It was all providential - that Maria Goretti's family was forced by poverty to leave the sunny house and fields of their first years to live in the Pontine Marshes - that her father's early death in that dank swamp land should make of Maria 'a little mother' before her time. It was providential, too, that the son of the partner, forced by circumstance to live in the same house, should be Alessandro Serenelli whose young mind and will were already corrupted by the worst literature of the time." Buerhle, St. Maria Goretti, front flap.

⁷⁹Homan, "To Maria," p. 125.

⁸⁰Strauss, "Maria Goretti", p. 305.

dear Maria, that the silent Alessandro ... began to look upon you with admiration.⁸¹

Certainly, there is a lack of clarity between child and woman in all of the writings. There is no questioning of the idea that sexual attraction towards a child is abnormal. Maria was female and therefore was an acceptable recipient of male sexual desire. This attitude is constantly reiterated so that it is clear that she or her body was responsible for Alessandro's attacks on her, in part, simply because she was so female, so virginal, so good. This is underscored in another way during the canonization process itself⁸² where the idea that being female meant that the victim of a sexual assault must in some way be responsible for the attack on her is seen. In the canonization process, a devil's advocate grilled Alessandro over and over again as to whether or not Maria had led him on in any way. And 'any way' meant had she by look, deed or word given him any reason to believe that his sexual approaches would have been accepted? Alessandro denied that she had done anything at all to provoke or encourage him in his assault. However, in the biography mentioned above it is interesting to hear of Serenelli's bitterness at the fact that she did not give in to him. If she had, they could have eventually married and everything would have been all right. It was her fault

⁸¹Homan, "To Maria", p. 122.

⁸²DiDonato, The Penitent, pp. 148-50, 160. A. D. Severance, "Beatification and Canonization with Special Reference to Historic Proof and the Proof of Miracles" Paper of the American Society of Church History, 2ieme ser.(1912/13), pp. 43-63.

that his life had been ruined.⁸³

This can be scary for a female at any level - she will look for any reason why she might have provoked the attack - only a look is sufficient for her to be held responsible for a sexual assault. On the other hand, even if one were as perfect as Maria was, a young female would still not be safe from attack, since it is in the nature of a man to be sexually aggressive.

b) Loss of virginity is worse than death

Traditionally, Christian doctrine has deemphasized the importance of the body and focused on the sexual act itself and the female body as the bearer of the worst sin. This position is reinforced by the purveyors of Maria's story. Those who hear of Maria Goretti are told that she died rather than allow herself to be sullied by loss of her virginity, her purity.

Maria's martyrdom was not an impromptu affair, but something well prepared for. But Maria Goretti did something more still: rather than take part in one single act of sin - an act for which she could have got absolution in five minutes in her next confession - she let herself be literally hacked to death.⁸⁴

She was not spoiled goods, something which the doctors checked out at the hospital immediately, so that they could reassure her mother that the worst had not happened to her. At least Maria had died a

⁸³DiDonato, The Penitent, p. 107.

⁸⁴Carr, Saint Maria Goretti, p. 10.

virgin, much to her mother's relief.⁸⁵ Another biographer of Maria extols her perfection while explaining the evils and enormous temptation of sexual activity:

How great is the error of those who consider virginity an effect of the ignorance or ingenuousness of little souls without passion, without ardour, without experience, and therefore accord it only a smile of pity! How can he who had surrendered without struggle imagine what strength it requires to dominate, without a moment of weakness, the secret stirrings and urgings of the senses and of the heart, which adolescence awakens in our fallen nature to resist, without a single compromise, the thousand little curiosities which impel one to see, to listen, to taste, to feel, and thus approach the lips to the intoxicating cup and inhale the deadly perfume of the flower of evil; ... Our Beata was a strong soul. She knew and understood; and that is precisely why she preferred to die. She was not merely an innocent *ingenue*, instinctively frightened by the shadow of sin. No, though still young, she already gave signs of the intensity and depth of her love for the divine redeemer ...⁸⁶

The implication in much of the theology involved in the writings about Maria is that the maintenance of bodily integrity means *intact hymen*. The importance of this is underlined by the present pope:

Maria Goretti, like every martyr is a martyr of Christ. ... what a vision of human greatness she proposes to you, ... Maria Goretti, through the very example of her life and her death, proposes to us an ideal of inestimable charm: that of 'caring for one's baptismal identity with great dedication, and of including in the framework of this formation the full and jealous cultivation of one's complete dignity - which is not only Christian but human - of which chastity is an expression of primary

⁸⁵"The anxious mother was officially assured that her child did not lose what she had fought so bravely to defend." Carr, St. Maria Goretti, p. 55.

⁸⁶Rev. Isadore L. Smith, C. P., "Foreword" in C. E. McGuire, Maria Goretti: Martyr of Purity, 1890-1902 (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1950), pp. 8-9.

importance.' ... For Christians, evil is not in the body; it is not in human sexuality. Evil is found in that 'concupiscence' which arises in the 'heart' of man wounded by original sin and which prompts him not to seek any longer the true good of the other, ...⁸⁷

The final word on the importance of adherence to a belief system goes to the present pope. "This twelve-year-old girl preferred the values of life to life itself."⁸⁸

c) Suffering brings its own reward

Maria Goretti was murdered because she consciously refused to be raped, and through suffering as she did for the right reasons she became a saint. Thus sexual assault, particularly if actual loss of virginity is avoided, no matter how much the victim may suffer, can be a blessing in disguise if Maria's story is any indication. Many 'goods' came from this sexual assault. Maria became a saint, the apex of possibilities for Roman Catholic women. Alessandro, her assailant, found redemption. Her entire family no longer had to live in poverty. The church received a model to use

⁸⁷Pope John Paul II, "Evil is not in the Body", p. 10. Further to this, see his apostolic letter in 1984. "Man suffers on account of evil, which is a certain lack, limitation or distortion of good. We could say that man suffers because of a good in which he does not share, from which in a certain sense he is cut off or of which he has deprived himself. He particularly suffers when he 'ought' - in the normal order of things - to have a share in this good and does not have it. Thus, in the Christian view, the reality of suffering is explained through evil, which always in some way refers to a good. "The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering," Apostolic Letter Salvifici Doloris, Origins 13:37(February 23, 1984), p. 612.

⁸⁸"Imitate Saint Maria Goretti", p. 8.

in educating its youth.

Maria's death not only brought about her own sainthood and allowed her to become an intercessor for others, but eventually, it also brought salvation to Alessandro Serenelli's lost soul. Furthermore, her mother was lifted from a life of poverty and was given a job as the housekeeper for a priest. All of Maria's siblings were taken under the special protection of subsequent popes.

Maria's murder continues its good work in that it is used as a reason to oppose capital punishment:

The Catholic Church was witness to an example of a truly repentant murderer on the occasion of the canonization of St. Maria Goretti June 24, 1950. Maria Goretti was a pious and innocent girl of 11 when she was stabbed to death while resisting the sexual advance of Alessandro Serenelli, a 19-year-old neighbor. Serenelli was convicted and imprisoned. In prison he underwent a gradual but deep-seated conversion. Forty-eight years after the crime, Alessandro was present, kneeling and weeping, in St. Peter's Square at the canonization of his victim.⁸⁹

Despite errors in fact,⁹⁰ if capital punishment had been inflicted upon Serenelli, there never would have been a chance for that conversion.

Without the assault and murder and the enormous suffering Maria went through, there would have been no martyrdom, no sainthood. Furthermore, she suffered willingly, and when

⁸⁹"Oklahoma Bishops," p. 76.

⁹⁰For example, Serenelli says that he was a bitter and unrepentant man until his vision of Maria after an earthquake in December 1910 caused his repentance and conversion. DiDonato, The Penitent, pp. 109-11.

Christianity through its correct teaching causes suffering, this is something which should be gladly endured, as Pope John Paul II explains

If it (Christian ethics) sometimes asks of us renunciation or sacrifice, it is precisely in order to purify human corporality, to elevate it, and with it to elevate man. ... Maria Goretti renounced her physical life precisely so as not to contaminate it with sin, so as not to sin against her body! She understood - and this is her lesson for us - that the true evil of the body is not so much suffering (she was even able to accept death), but the voluntary action - sin - that one commits against the body and against that finality of life and of propagation of life that creative Wisdom has placed in it. The conquest of chastity requires the courageous and persevering effort of the will strengthened by divine grace, which heals the evil inclinations of nature and orients it towards the good.⁹¹

No one ever asks what effect all this has on the Christian child who neither manages to avoid rape nor gets killed.

d) The importance of forgiveness

If there was anything that clinched Maria's sainthood, it was the fact that she forgave Alessandro Serenelli for assaulting and killing her. Her concern was repeatedly over his lost soul. She was asked over and over again, by the priest who was by her bedside, whether or not she forgave him.

Never one bitter word against her murderer had escaped her lips, and even to her last breath, as we shall presently see, the thought of his eternal ruin was uppermost in her mind. However, the Archpriest of Nettuno - a faithful visitor - thought it well to question her on the subject. He broached it delicately, reminding Maria of Our Lord's pardoning the repentant thief on the cross

⁹¹Pope John Paul II, "Evil is not in the body," pp. 10-11.

and of His generous words, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." But there was no need for his delicacy and his task was easy. "And you, Marietta, do you forgive your murderer from your heart?" - "Yes," came the quick response, "for the love of Jesus I also forgive him." ... "And I want him to be with me in paradise."⁹²

Although she was in such pain, her constant concern was that his soul not be lost. Following Maria's example, her mother also forgave Alessandro and met with him after he got out of jail.⁹³

e) Maria as the ideal daughter

In his 1947 beatification address the Pope stated that

Maria ... is the mature fruit of a Christian home with its old, simple method of education, ... of a home where one prays, where children are brought up in the fear of God in obedience to their parents, in the love of truth and self-respect; accustomed to be satisfied with little and to give a helping hand.⁹⁴

From the point of view of recent child development language, circumstance created a situation where Maria had to take on age inappropriate responsibilities. In this respect she was considered to be an absolute model of the uncomplaining and serving female.

In addition to her unusual piety which had almost an adult quality - she would trudge for miles on foot for the privilege of hearing Mass and exhibit none of the usual signs of distraction - she had all the domestic virtues to a remarkable extent: she was generous and uncomplaining; she cheerfully undertook more than her fair share of the household chores, and acted as an

⁹²Carr, St. Maria Goretti, p. 56.

⁹³DiDonato, The Penitent, pp.142, 164-4.

⁹⁴Pope Pius XII.

additional mother to her younger brothers and sisters.⁹⁵ She is praised for not burdening her mother with the fact that she had been accosted by Alessandro. Her mother did not see the dangers of leaving Maria at Alessandro's mercy - she 'was herself too wholesome to guess this.'⁹⁶ In point of fact Assunta Goretti is fully exonerated from any responsibility in Maria's death.⁹⁷ "... (Maria) had been fortunate enough to have had a strict, but loving, mother possessed of enough spiritual horse-sense to be able to distinguish between the essential and inessentials of life."⁹⁸ This 'horse-sense' obviously did not include how to recognize people who might be a danger to her children. Maria is applauded more than once for not having bothered her mother with the fact that Alessandro had sexually assaulted her prior to the murder. In fact, he had threatened to kill both her and her mother if she told of the propositions, according to one author.⁹⁹ Another author exalts her silence - "Had you been less courageous, you would have told your mother. ... *But Mamma must not know I have a single worry.*"¹⁰⁰

Pope John Paul II makes the following statement

⁹⁵Strauss, "St. Maria Goretti", p. 305.

⁹⁶Homan, "To Maria," p. 122. Cf. Matt. 5:21-30 et al. "one must not even think bad thoughts."

⁹⁷Carr, Saint Maria Goretti, Buehrle, St. Maria Goretti.

⁹⁸Strauss, *Ibid*, p. 309

⁹⁹McGuire, Maria Goretti, p. 47.

¹⁰⁰Homan, "To Maria," p. 123.

Such a witness is needed in the setting in which we live, where there is often despair rather than hope, where life seems to be without prospects. It is a little puzzling when one considers that the people living in wealthy nations so often live sadder lives than the simple and poor people of more impoverished nations.¹⁰¹

It is typical of the incest victim that she does not tell anyone about it, particularly not to her mother. Here we have this behaviour being applauded as exemplary. Furthermore, we also know that the incest victim often takes on the role of mother/wife in the family structure. This too is reinforced in a positive manner from the religious perspective in the story of Maria.

Summary

Children attempt to understand and, within their own limited experience, find some explanation for the world and what happens to them. Unlike the biblical material, where the problem could be called a 'sin of omission,' the content of the Maria Goretti story deals with child sexual assault and gives guidelines on how to interpret that assault. The abuser is not really responsible for his actions although he can be punished for them; the prettier and more innocent a little girl is, the more likely she is to be assaulted; the loss of virginity is really a fate worse than death; if she suffers, it is a good thing and will bring about positive results; the abuser must be immediately forgiven whether he is sorry for what he did or not. Finally, she must be an obedient,

¹⁰¹"Be True Christians", p. 3.

helpful child and she must not bother anyone, particularly not her mother, if she is sexually assaulted. All this story has done is set up a female child as the perfect victim for sexual assault, particularly if that abuser is her father.

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the views, or lack thereof, about child sexual assault that operate in Christianity. These views form a backdrop to Christian instruction and will be understood by the Christian child to be related to god. When those life experiences include sexual assault by her father, a Christian daughter will try to find some of the explanation for the assault in her religious belief system. The daughter will believe that the rules that are attributed to that god explain the way that she should behave and how she should respond to the assault experience. She will reorganize her self-image around how she understands her role and responsibilities as they relate to her father, her mother and her god from the messages given to her through her belief system.

The following chapter will analyze the development of the god image as it is found in writers who use object relations theory to analyze the impact that the god image has during the lifespan of believers. Since I wish to argue that the way in which to understand the impact that the Christian god has on the lives of daughters traumatized by sexual assault is to envision the Christian god as a third parent, it will be necessary to briefly discuss the use of the theoretical construct of the transitional object in psychology of religion. This construct has been the

focus of writers who try to explain the development of god images in Christianity and their continuing impact through the lifespan of individual Christians.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CREATED GOD

The Development of the God Representation in Christianity

God is the father in heaven who does everything for his children because he loves them, say some people. Now, I shall for once tell God how I think about him.

God has given me a mother who didn't want me. I had ruined her life, she always told me.

God gave me a father who battered and abused me for 30 years.

God has given me a father who continuously abused me and my children.

God has given my daughter a father who wanted to rape her when she was three and a half years old.

Now thank you very much, God, that you loved me so much and that you wanted to give me so much!

But God, I want *nothing* more from you do you hear that? I want nothing more from you, please leave me in peace.

Leave me to lead my own god damned life.

God damn it! Leave me for once to decide what I want and don't try to continuously interfere in my life.

I wish that you would disappear altogether from my life.

But that you don't do, you dummy. Any chance you get you permit other people to tell me that I should think about God, now I do not want to think about that. When do you think about me?

I find you no father, I find you a sadist, who is out to pester and humiliate some people.

Now leave me and my children alone for once. Give me please the time to finally for once find out who and what I truly am.

For there I am, thanks to you, after 36 years not yet begun.

Thus leave me alone, god damn it and disappear out of my life, I don't want you any more, I have *no need* of you.¹

¹Nel, in Annie Imbens-Fransen and Ineke Jonkers, Godsdienst en incest: de Horstink i.s.m. de Vereniging tegen Seksuele Kindermishandeling binnen het Gezin, (Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1985), p. 78. Translation by Sheila A. Redmond and Clasina Redmond.

Introduction

In this chapter, the 'place' that the god of Christianity has in the Christian child's life will be discussed by first exploring the object relations model of god as a transitional object and the idea of god as an object or object representation. One of the most recent theoretical constructions for understanding the interpersonal impact of the Christian god on the lives of believers has been the idea of god as a transitional object and the claim that religious beliefs and religion in general belong to a transitional sphere of development.² I will show in this chapter that this is an inadequate approach to analyzing the impact of the Christian god on its believers, since it implies that god is very much a creation of the individual and that an individual's pathological god is only peripherally related to external factors. It will be suggested that, for a number of reasons, in order to analyze the impact of the god representation on the lives of believers, there is another way of viewing the data which will be more productive. It will be argued that interpreting the Christian god as a third parent allows for a better understanding of the continuing impact of certain beliefs and structures on the lives of trauma victims. Just as psychological dynamics are attributed to the relationship between

²This was first articulated by D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" (1953) and reprinted in Playing and Reality (New York: Basic Books, 1971), pp. 1-25, in which he elaborates on his thinking about the role of the transitional sphere in the creation of culture. The concept's role in psychoanalysis and religion begins with the work of Paul Pruyser, W. W. Meissner and Ana Marie Rizzuto.

the child and the parents (particularly in a therapeutic environment), they should also be attributed to the relationship between the child and the Christian god. In this way, the impact of god in the entire context of Christian father-daughter incest cases can be analyzed with reference to its role in the recovery process. The task of the remainder of the thesis will then be to show that the present structure of the Christian view of god and god's relationship with believers constitutes a serious impediment - a stumbling block - to the recovery from father-daughter incest.

The Importance of God Images and Societal Development

There are many different studies which have shown that there is a relationship between self-image and god-image.³ One study, which used a questionnaire method for analysing the relationship of god images to parental images, found many differences. To quote from the abstract:

In all samples, the image of God is more paternal than maternal. In the American samples, unlike the Belgian, God appears to become gradually more maternal. American females and males both emphasize the paternal qualities of god ... unlike the French speaking Belgian sample who emphasize the parental qualities corresponding to their own sex. In the American sample, specialized field of study does not appear to be related to the God concept, unlike the Belgian among whom scientific students

³P. Benson and B. Spilka, "God-Image as a Function of Self-Esteem and Locus of Control" JSSR 12(1973), pp. 297-310. Carrol Saussy, God Images and Self Esteem: Empowering Women in a Patriarchal Society (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), Mary Lou Randour and Julie Bondanza, "The Concept of God in the Psychological Formation of Females" Psychoanalytic Psychology 4(1987), pp. 301-13.

conceive of God more maternally and literary students more paternally. (In the American sample, liberal arts students do report a more maternal mother and a less paternal father than science students.)⁴

Others have suggested that there is a relationship between the religious beliefs associated with god-images, the child-rearing practices of a society and the levels of violence in that society.⁵ For example, Lambert, Triandis and Wolf found that societies with beliefs in aggressive deities were more likely to use pain and punishment in the course of normal child raising.⁶ In other words, a malevolent supernatural world correlated positively with punitive

⁴It is obvious from the findings that cultural distinctions play a role in the conception of the god image. The American sample was Roman Catholic. The Christian denomination is not noted for the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking Belgian samples. What is not discussed are the implications that the study has for understanding the cultural peculiarities of the image of God that the students were raised with. Antoine Vergote and A. Ramayo, L. Pasquali, M. Bonami, M-R Pattyn, A. Custers, "Concept of God and Parental Images" JSSR 8(1969), pp. 79-87. See also A. Godin, and M. Hallez, "Parental images and divine paternity," in From religious experience to a religious attitude, (Brussels: Lumen Vitae Press, 1964), pp. 79-110.

⁵Alice Miller, For Your Own Good: Hidden cruelty in child-rearing and the roots of violence, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1983(1980)), A. S. Neill, Summerhill (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1960), and Freedom Not License (New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1966), John Holt, Escape From Childhood: The Needs and Rights of Children (New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1974), Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), John Ritchie and Jane Ritchie, Spare the Rod (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia Pte Ltd, 1981), Philip Greven, Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991).

⁶W. W. Lambert, L. M. Triandis and M. Wolf, "Some correlates of beliefs in the malevolence and benevolence of supernatural beings: A cross societal study," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 57(1959), pp. 162-68.

infant and child-rearing practices, while beliefs in the benevolence of the supernatural world correlated with more nurturant practices in infant and child training. Spiro and D'Andrade suggest that the perceived reliability (contingency) or unreliability (non-contingency) of the god image and religious beliefs is a factor in the methods of child rearing employed in a particular society. Their study was not as conclusive as that of Lambert et al., but this may in part be related to their focus on ritual as indicative of religious belief and behaviour, and its relationship to benevolent or malevolent deities.⁷

Monographs on religious development or on the development of god images of adults in therapy often leave the impression that god images or representations have been created almost 'ex nihilo' by that person with little outside influence, especially when the god representation is 'not nice' or is unacceptable to the therapist.⁸ Often the question of the religious socialization of the individual is not fully addressed, since in the final analysis the emphasis of the therapist is on individual pathology.⁹ The problems that arise

⁷M. E. Spiro and R. G. D'Andrade, "A Cross Cultural Study of Some Supernatural Beliefs," American Anthropologist, 60(1958), pp. 456-66. See also A. Kardiner and R. Linton, The Individual and His Society, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) and J. H. M. Whiting and I. L. Child, Child Training and Personality: A Cross Cultural Study, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

⁸R. J. Lovinger, Working with Religious Issues in Therapy (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1984). Lovinger not only discusses the problems of the therapist's own beliefs as they come into contact with their clients' beliefs, but also the role that unresolved religious questions play in countertransference.

⁹Seldom does one encounter an acknowledgement such as the one in Lions of God, Lambs of God. The author, Mark Kane, notes that

when due acknowledgement or understanding has not been given to the cultural context of the creation of a god representation can be seen in a book by psychologist David Heller. The Children's God¹⁰ is a fascinating study of the god images from children of different ages raised in four different religious backgrounds. He acknowledges that his analysis left unanswered questions. They would have perhaps been at least partly explicable in terms of the specific doctrines concerning the god that each of these children had been given by their environment. Since there is a distinct lack of understanding of some of the basic constructs of the children's religious upbringing and the theological underpinnings of their religious system, his analysis is incomplete.¹¹

Object relations analyses of human phenomena arose out of the psychoanalytic tradition which began with Sigmund Freud.¹² Psychoanalysis has undergone many changes since its inception and the move away from drive-theory analysis has been one of the most

the role which religious doctrines themselves play in the creation of the passive/dependent personalities that he is analyzing is important although would not be addressed in this study which is only looking at the *fait accompli*. Mark Kane, Lions of God, Lambs of God: Psychoanalytic Concepts of Passivity, Dependency and Celibacy within the Christian Clergy (Oceansides, NY: Dabor Science Publications, 1977).

¹⁰David Heller, The Children's God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). See review by John Meagher which makes some of the same points. Grail 5:(1989), pp. 93-98.

¹¹Compare this with Robert Coles, The Spiritual Life of Children (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990).

¹²Dieter Wyss, Psychoanalytic Schools From the Beginning to the Present Gerald Onn, trans. (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1973). J. Greenberg and S. Mitchell, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

profound.¹³ W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, considered a father of object relations theory, argued that human beings from birth are motivated by 'object-seeking,' that is, the need to form relationships with those people around them,¹⁴ as opposed to being controlled by internal drives and stress reduction (libido is not primarily pleasure-seeking, but object-seeking). It is out of this field that much research has been generated with regard to religious behaviour.¹⁵ One of the significant areas for research has been the development of the idea of transitional phenomena and a transitional sphere to explain the functioning of religion in people's lives and the relationship between god and believers. This will be explored in the following sections in order to establish its usefulness as a means for understanding the impact that the belief in the Christian god has on a daughter who has been raised in a traditional Christian environment and who has been sexually assaulted by her father.

Transitional Objects and the Transitional Sphere

The idea of transitional object or transitional phenomena and

¹³Stephen Mitchell, Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: an integration (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988).

¹⁴W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, " Object Relationships and Dynamic Structure(1946) " Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality (London: Tavistock/Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 137-51.

¹⁵David M. Wulff, Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), pp. 317-58.

the notion of the transitional sphere were first elaborated by Winnicott in an article in 1953 and then more fully explored for its broader cultural implications in his book, Playing and Reality. For children, the transitional objects are those which bridge the gap between the self and the real world during the individuation process of the infant and growing child. The transitional sphere is the place where fantasy and creativity resides. Winnicott further hypothesizes that this area of transition, which contains a mixture of fantasy and reality elements, is maintained through dispersal and diffusion into the cultural areas of life as the child develops and matures into adulthood.¹⁶

The concepts of transitional phenomena and a transitional sphere are useful in explaining certain aspects of religion and religious beliefs in the life of human beings.¹⁷ The concept of transitional phenomena, transitional objects and the transitional sphere places religious images and other phenomena within the normal working arena of human experiences. As McDargh and Pruyser point out, all belief and religious creativity take place in a cultural context. This is no less true for the development of the image of God. Any discussion of the god representation must

¹⁶D. W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, (New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1971) and Paul Pruyser, The Play of the Imagination: Toward a Psychoanalysis of Culture (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1983)

¹⁷Not all authors feel that transitional objects should refer to god. Leroy T. Howe, "Crisis of Belief: An Object Relations Perspective" argues that belief systems are the transitional objects and therefore more open to flexible use. Given an immutable god, this is logical stance for him to take. See Lovinger, Working, pp. 125-27.

maintain that balance between the fantasies, symbolizations and expectations of the individual and their interplay with the collective views of the society about god.¹⁸

Description of Transitional Objects

In his paper "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena", Winnicott summarized the special qualities of the transitional object. The following seven points are Winnicott's summary of the special qualities of the infant/transitional object relationship.¹⁹

1. The infant assumes rights over the object, and we agree to this assumption. Nevertheless, some abrogation of omnipotence is a feature from the start.
2. The object is affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated.
3. It must never change, unless changed by the infant.
4. It must survive instinctual loving, and also hating and, if it be a feature, pure aggression.
5. Yet it must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show it has vitality or reality of its own.
6. It comes from without from our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby. Neither does it come from within; it is not a hallucination.
7. Its fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathected,

¹⁸John McDargh, Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), p. 141.

¹⁹D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," Playing and Reality, (New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1971), p. 5.

so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo. By this I mean that in health the transitional object does not 'go inside' [it has not been incorporated] nor does the feeling about it necessarily undergo repression. It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between 'inner psychic reality' and 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common', that is to say, over the whole cultural field.

In further explanation of the transitional object, Winnicott describes the object as one which appears to be 'found' by the infant.²⁰ Everything in the infant's life, is in one sense, found by the infant. In order to further creativity, that 'foundness' should not be challenged. When one witnesses an infant using the transitional object, one is witnessing the child's first use of symbol and first experience of play.²¹ An infant's transitional object, the first 'not-me' possession, will be gradually decathected, especially as other cultural interests develop and replace it.²² A transitional object, then, is found, created, destroyed and recreated as necessary.

Paul Pruyser has further developed and expanded the analysis of the transitional sphere and transitional objects in his book, The Play of the Imagination. In it, he describes seven purposes and functions that transitional objects have for the child.²³

²⁰D. W. Winnicott "The Location of Cultural Experience" in Winnicott, Playing, pp. 96-7 & 101.

²¹Winnicott, "Location," p. 96.

²²Winnicott, "Transitional," p. 14.

²³Pruyser, Play, pp. 58-60.

1. It is an intermediate entity that represents both "inside" and "outside" and may well facilitate traffic between the two.
2. It serves as mother substitute or emblem that gives solace in mother's absence. It is more controllable, its availability is almost constant, and it is socially granted by family members.
3. It is very likely an emblem of the nascent self. It is an exterior entity that can be seen, touched and objectified as something "out there" and may be the first functional means for articulating that aspect of selfhood that is social and public.
4. It has the quality of first possession; owned, held, kept, safeguarded, and prized, and child's ownership vouchsafed by family.
5. The transitional object resists being incorporated and decomposed by attempts at fusion. It signals intense love and hate relations and must be able to survive aggressive attacks on it and survive being intensely loved.
6. Its absence leads to search behaviour as long as the child's attachment to it persists.
7. Being inanimate, it receives without protest the child's projections upon it and thus functions as a screen for imagining and magical manipulation.

Pruyser has clearly placed emphasis on the social acceptance and validity given to the transitional object by the environment, that is, the family members.

In the final analysis, a transitional object is an aid in the process from dependence to independence, from illusion to disillusionment, from fantasy to reality, from inner to outer, from narcissism to true object relating, and from the self to the other. It is an important bridge in a child's struggle from dependence to independence, in the individuation process of a child's

development.²⁴

Negativity in the Transitional Sphere

While this transitional sphere should be a positive, growth enhancing, creative arena for the child, it can also have a very destructive aspect in cases of 'premature failure of environmental reliability.' Then this transitional sphere becomes an oppressive place:

The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. It can be looked upon as sacred to the individual in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living.

By contrast, exploitation of this area leads to a pathological condition in which the individual is cluttered up with persecutory elements of which he has no means of ridding himself.²⁵

If a transitional object does not become decathected, this is often an indication that there are problems in a child's coping abilities, in the developmental structure. This failure begins during the individuation process, when this potential space has material injected into it by someone other than the child, i.e., when the nature of the transitional object is challenged. Winnicott suggests that whatever is in this space that comes from someone else is persecutory material and the child has no means of

²⁴Philip Charles Kronk, A Reanalysis of the Leopold-Loeb Psychiatric Trial Testimony: An Object Relations Theory and Borderline State Perspective PhD Dissertation, Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee, 1978, p. 80.

²⁵Winnicott, Playing, p. 103.

rejecting it.²⁶ This happens when someone questions the reality or non-reality, or the meaning of the transitional object. The 'object' has been interfered with externally and has become terrifying. He states that when this is done, the meanings or interpretations coming from the outside are not only intrusive but are actually oppressive and outside the child's (infant's) ability to change or to shake off. The negative relationship that is created between the child and her transitional objects and the area of play is retained into adulthood, with the result that the ability of the maturing individual and his or her ability to be involved in creative activity is severely hampered.

Theories of God as a Transitional Object

In attempting to explain the creation and development of god representations one of the most influential interpretations has been to view god as a transitional object and religious belief and religious constructions as belonging in the transitional sphere.²⁷ The different aspects of religion also belong in this area although

²⁶Winnicott, Playing, p. 102.

²⁷Even those who question the use of transitional object development for god, like the notion of transition sphere to explain the functioning of religious beliefs, symbols and images. Jame W. Jones Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion: Transference and Transcendence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). See Chris R. Schlauch, "Illustrating Two Complementary Enterprises at the Interface of Psychology and Religion Through Reading Winnicott" Pastoral Psychology 39:1(1990), pp. 47-63.

Winnicott himself discussed the religious aspect only fleetingly.²⁸ Lovinger states the advantages of the conceptualization of the transitional sphere and religion's place in it in the following manner:

Specifically, religious symbolism, imagery, and ideation can be understood as partly rooted in the transitional sphere. That is, it involves interfaces between the early internal world of needs; partly differentiated self-objects; burgeoning motor, language, and cognitive skills; and the external world, ... Thus a person's religious imagery not only serves as a repository of significant life experiences and adaptations to life, but also as a truly transitional object in providing reassurance and comfort in the face of abandonment, loneliness, and fear.²⁹

However, there are problems associated with this model that make it suspect as a useful category for explaining the impact of belief in the Christian god and its interaction in human development. The fact is that both Meissner and Rizzuto feel that there are differences between the transitional object and the god transitional object. A closer examination of the special properties of the transitional object will highlight the problems associated with conceiving the development of the Christian god as related to the role of the transitional object in development.

Meissner makes the following points that differentiate the Christian god from the normal transitional object:

a) god doesn't follow the usual order of a transitional object,

²⁸For example, Winnicott, Playing, pp. 13, 14, 62. See Madeleine Davis and David Wallbridge, Boundary and Space: An Introduction to the Work of D. W. Winnicott, (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1981), p. 6.

²⁹Lovinger, Working, p. 125.

- b) god is not gradually decathected to be forgotten and relegated to psychic limbo,
- c) god is cathected in increasing intensity and reaches a peak at the high point of oedipal excitement,
- d) god lives on the border of human reality, not inside or outside, neither wholly illusion or purely subjective, nor truly concrete,
- e) god is created out of representational derivatives from the child's experience of primary objects, for example, the parents, and
- f) god maintains potentiality for revivification and further integration.³⁰

In what she calls the central theses of her book, Rizzuto describe the differences between the Christian god and the transitional object with the following points:

- a) God is a special type of object representation created by the child in that psychic space where transitional objects ... are provided with their powerfully real illusory lives.
- b) God, like all transitional objects ... is located *simultaneously* "outside, inside and at the border" ... God "is not a hallucination" and "in health ... does not 'go inside' nor does the feeling about it necessarily undergo repression. It is not forgotten and it is not mourned" ...
- c) God is a special transitional object because ... he is created from representational materials whose sources are the representations of primary objects.
- d) God is also a special transitional object because he does not follow the usual course of other transitional objects. Generally, the transitional object is "gradually allowed to be decathected, so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo ... Instead of losing meaning, God's meaning becomes heightened by the oedipal experience and all other pregenital events that have contributed to the

³⁰W. W. Meissner, Life and Faith: Psychological Perspectives on Religious Experience, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987), pp. 43-44.

reelaboration of his representational characteristics. Sometimes, however, he may seem to lose meaning, paradoxically, on account of being rejected, ignored, suppressed, or found temporarily unnecessary. Nonetheless, as is true of all other objects, God cannot be fully repressed. ...

e) The psychic process of creating and finding God - this personalized representational transitional object - never ceases in the course of human life.

f) God is not the only mental representation used by children and adults alike as a transitional object. ... however, God has a special place, because he is the cultural creation offered to men for their private and public (in official religions) reelaboration of those primary ties that accompany each of us "unto the grave."

g) The child's and adult's sense of self is affected by the representational traits of the individual's private God. Consciously, preconsciously, or unconsciously, God, our own creation, like a piece of art ... will, in reflecting what we have done, affect our sense of ourselves.³¹

These are significant differences and one cannot help but wonder as to how useful a model is, if it needs so many exceptions to it in order to explain its functioning. A closer look at a few of the differences is warranted. These differences are in the control of the object, the social dimension, its tactile nature, its lack of sentience, its survival, and its loss of meaning.

a) Control of the object: One of the most important points about a transitional object is that it is under the sole control of the child.³² A transitional object becomes invested with whatever

³¹A. M. Rizzuto, The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Approach, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 177-80.

³²Winnicott, #1, 2, 3 & 7; Pruyser, #2, 4 & 7. Numbers refer to the descriptions of transitional objects given on pp. 153-155 above.

illusion and fantasy with which the child wants to invest it. The same cannot be said about the conception of the Christian god. The god has a reality different from the teddy bear or the blanket. Although the teddy bear may mean something to the adults, the child is usually not told what she must do with it or how she must think about it. The fact that the god image changes and develops as the human being develops may be deceptive and give the impression that it is under the control of the person.³³ However, the social nature of god and belief systems are such that when changes can occur in the conception of the god, there can be a concomitant change in the relationship of the patient to the significant others in her life.³⁴ Traumatic events such as death and incest can have an impact on the perceived nature of god, as can study and discussion with others.

b) Social Dimension: God is a reality or part of 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common,' as opposed to the uniquely private world of the transitional object.³⁵ To disavow that god is to disavow more than a private symbol. Pruyser makes the point very clearly in his discussion. For both Winnicott

³³For example, Lovinger notes that there are changes in the god image during therapy that can be specifically related to the changes in the perception of the parents. Working, pp. 174, 201.

³⁴For example, one woman explains how rejecting the god she had always believed in and finding a new perception of god, had enabled her to finally stand up to her father. Annie Imbens-Fransen and Ineke Jonker, Godsdienst en incest: de Horstink i.s.m. de Vereniging tegen Seksuele Kindermishandeling binnen het Gezin (Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1985), p. 179.

³⁵Winnicott, #1 & 6, Pruyser, #2.

and Pruyser, the emphasis is on the private nature of the transitional object which may even stand for the self.

Adults do not as a rule believe in monsters, imaginary friends, Santa Claus or Superman - in fact they often tolerate amusingly the child's belief and use of these figures. This is not the case, however, with the person of God as he is known and explained by the parents, the minister, the priest, the Sunday School teacher and others.³⁶

c) Tactile Nature: A transitional object must have a tactile nature about it.³⁷ The child must be able to feel it and to manipulate it. The child is, of course, unable to do this with the Christian god. There may be other religious objects which could serve this purpose such as a rosary. However, even a statue of Jesus or Mary are unlikely to have much in the way of manipulative tactilability nor is it likely that the child will be allowed to play with these representative images of the Christian god and the belief system.

d) Lack of Sentience: The teddy bear does not have any objective existence of its own - it is not 'sensate.' It is an inanimate object and does not have its own thoughts, will or existence other than what the child gives it.³⁸ The teddy bear, the blanket, these things are inanimate and can be invested with meaning just as drawings are invested with meaning by their

³⁶Rizzuto, Birth, pp. 191-4.

³⁷Winnicott, #5, Pruyser, #3.

³⁸Winnicott, #1 & 3, Pruyser, #2 & 7.

artists. The problem is that, for those who believe, god is not conceived of as an inanimate object that the human being invests with meaning. In traditional Christian theology, god has existence, will, thoughts, etc., outside of the control of the child.³⁹ For god to be a transitional object, then, it has to be accepted that god is an inanimate object that she can invest with whatever meaning she sees fit, and in Christianity this is not entirely possible. Its god is given from the outside and there are certain parameters within which god-talk takes place. While those parameters, the bible and tradition, primarily, have a certain flexibility - note the many different forms of Christianity in existence - there are limits to how one can view the relationship between the god and believers and still consider the god the Christian god.

If the Christian god is an external existent fact for believers, even though 'he' can't be seen, who lives with everyone, who would never do anything without a purpose, then the difference between that god and the transitional object becomes apparent - teddy bears can't do things for a purpose and drawings can't withhold investment and god can.

e) Survival: A transitional object must be able to survive and it resists being incorporated into the self - like object

³⁹Paul Pruyser talks of how he played with the words, god and dog, as a young child and got great satisfaction from the play. This kind of play invites a certain similarity to the notion of transitional object and god but it is only useful in a limited sense. Paul Pruyser, "Forms and Functions in the Imagination in Religion," Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic 49:4(1985), pp. 353-70.

representations, for example, of the what parents are.⁴⁰ The transitional object must be able to be destroyed and recreated at will. This does not not happen with the Christian god. By definition and tradition, this god is unchanging, immutable, the same today as he was yesterday and will be tomorrow and this is how he is presented to children. This god can be destroyed and cannot be recreated, no matter how hard the believer tries to retain her belief.⁴¹

f) Loss of Meaning: Probably the most important difference between the transitional object and the Christian god is the issue of loss of meaning.⁴² It is the quality of the transitional object to gradually be decathected or lose its importance. However, the Christian god continues to give meaning and importance to life for millions of believers. Even in those who say that they no longer believe or have rejected that god, they often still carry around feelings about him, even if only anger.⁴³ If god were a transitional object, then one could extrapolate from Winnicott's description above that anyone who still gives meaning to a god representation after childhood is not healthy, psychologically

⁴⁰Winnicott, #2 & 5: Pruyser #5 & 7.

⁴¹Imbens-Fransen, Godsdienst, pp. 159.

⁴²Winnicott: #7.

⁴³The women in Annie Imbens-Fransen's study initially insisted that they were opposed to belief systems and God and they saw no need to discuss the matter. However, during therapy they continuously brought god into their discussions. Imbens-Fransen, Godsdienst, p. 177.

speaking.⁴⁴ Carried to its logical conclusion, it would mean that anyone who retains a belief in god after childhood is suffering from some form of pathology, because something has gone wrong, there has been negativity in the transitional sphere - the ambiguity and the transitional nature of this object has been lost and the object has become oppressive.⁴⁵

God, for the Christian child, does not lose meaning, and if that child ceases to believe in that god, then it must become repressed or dealt with in some way. This is becoming clearer as stories from child sexual assault victims from religious backgrounds who claim to be atheists or agnostics or who have chosen alternative religious belief systems. As therapy progresses and their anger at god surfaces and depression in relation to 'him' is enacted, it becomes apparent that the Christian god still exists for them.⁴⁶ It would seem that if left behind by those with a strong religious upbringing, god does not just filter away and disappear. Therefore, god has been repressed and must be retrieved

⁴⁴There are some that probably think this is an apt description of god and humans. Wendell W. Watters, "A Psychiatrist's Assessment of Christian Doctrine" Humanist in Canada 20:4(1987/88), pp. 7-10.

⁴⁵Pruyser argues that this god can become too 'real' because it was interfered with from external sources and thus became oppressive, a sign of negativity in the transitional sphere. Pruyser has suggested that this is a failure of a religious system that makes its god too real and gives rise to institutionalization and dogma. He states that this god lives in the 'realist' institutionalized area of human existence and not in the transitional sphere of creativity. Pruyser, "Forms and Functions" pp. 361-4. What is surprising is that Rizzuto, Birth, did not develop this part of Winnicott's transitional object theory.

⁴⁶Imbens-Fransen, Godsdienst, pp. 177-9.

and perhaps even mourned over as are other losses, particularly in a therapeutic context.

The use of the concept of transitional object may be useful when the given god of childhood is not a strong central figure in the home environment and is not supported by external forces. To compare the god object of Christianity, which receives parental approval, support and worship as an existing and all powerful being, to other fantasy objects like witches, gnomes, monsters, to the teddy bear, the blanket or the thumb, is to underdetermine the impact of the god representation that the child has on his or her reality.⁴⁷

There is a saying "If it walks like a duck and it talks like a duck, chances are it is a duck." By analogy, "If doesn't look like a transitional object and it doesn't behave like a transitional object, chances are it isn't a transitional object." The questions remains why was this particular concept chosen to portray the development of the god image in humans? One of the reasons why the model of the transitional object for development of god representations has been popular is that the therapist and theologian can deny that the god that their patients/clients/believers present to them has any relation to the reality of god, the *acceptable god representation*.⁴⁸ Rizzuto never explains or defines what she means by an *acceptable God representation*, nor does she describe what the characteristics of the *official God* of

⁴⁷Rizzuto, *Birth*, pp. 191-4.

⁴⁸This is what the patients in her case studies all lack.

religion are.⁴⁹ From the way she uses the terms, one can deduce that they are one and the same.⁵⁰ An explanation of her norms for determining the unacceptability of her clients' god representations should have been included.⁵¹ Thus it remains unclear what Rizzuto's acceptable god representation would be like

⁴⁹One suggestion I would make is that this is quite probably a countertransference problem for Rizzuto. On reading the stories of her patients, it becomes clear that the way they talk about god is not unrelated to the god with which most Christians grew up. The difference is that they, for different reasons, ended up focused almost solely on the negative personality traits of the god. To be reminded of the god who will punish us with hell if we are bad or the god who didn't answer our prayers when we asked for something really important can be very disconcerting, and in a therapist, this can cause serious therapeutic problems. See Lovinger, Working. James Masterson, Countertransference and Therapeutic Technique: Teaching Seminars in the Psychotherapy of the Borderline Adult (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1983). But see Kathleen N. Lewis and David A. Lewis, "Impact of Religious Affiliation on Therapists' Judgments of Patients" Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 53(1985), pp. 926-32.

⁵⁰Rizzuto, Birth, makes the statement that "In the believer, the battle between a more conceptually based type of God [the god of organized religion] and the more experientially enmeshed God representation [the transitional god] fabricated in the context of an antagonistic or too sexualized relation with the parents, may collide and create conflict." (p. 48-9). It seems clear that, to her, the official god of religion is a nice god. Yet all the parents of the patients in the case studies she presents, raised their children with a religious education. (pp. 36-7, 44-5, 50). While she is talking about the beginning of the impact of trauma as it relates to the development of dissonance between experience and god, she places the dissonance as occurring between the distorted god representations her clients have and the acceptable god representation, the god of organized religion. I am arguing that the problem lies in the dissonance created between reality as a sexually abused daughter experiences it and the god of official religion, Rizzuto's acceptable god representation.

⁵¹She says that she is writing a book on object relations not on religion. Perhaps she feels that this excuses her from dealing with the characteristics of the given god. By using transitional object for god, she creates a system in which she can avoid the condemnation of the religious system inherent in the lives of the four people she discusses. Rizzuto, Birth, p. 170.

if her patients were healthy psychologically.⁵² Victim-blaming is the result when it is argued or implied that the patient created this distorted god representation *ex nihilo* in the transitional sphere where it was wholly under the patient's control.⁵³

Another reason that the use of a transitional object may have been found to be useful to religious psychoanalysts and theorists is that the transitional sphere is neither wholly external nor wholly internal. It is the place where play, illusion, the real and not real, mingle but without objective reality. Therefore, it satisfies an explanation of religion based on faith, not wholly objectively provable, but not completely subjective either, since it can be shared with others.

At the same time that faith asserts, however, it cannot demonstrate the independent reality of the spiritual world and to which it lays claim. Consequently, the experience of faith is not totally subjective, nor is it totally objective. Rather, it represents a realm in which the subjective and the objective interpenetrate.⁵⁴

⁵²McDargh says that a healthy god representation would bear a resemblance to the psychologically healthy person. McDargh, Psychoanalytic, p. 132. Furthermore, Rizzuto seems to accept a statement from one mother, who attributed bad things to god, to the effect that she did not believe in god. However, this mother sent her daughter to mass and took her to her first confession and communion when she was afraid to go. At the very least, the mother could be said to have ambivalent feelings about god, not simply that "her conflicts are evident." Birth, pp. 172-3, n. 13. If Rizzuto had considered the possibility that the mother believed in a vengeful, punishing god, then the position she puts forward concerning the construction of Bernadette Fisher's god would not be so tenable as an example of transitional god formation.

⁵³Rizzuto, Birth, pp. 36, 105-8.

⁵⁴W. W. Meissner, Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 178-9. Chris R. Schlauch, "Illustrating Two Complementary Enterprises at the Interface of Psychology and Religion Through Reading Winnicott" Pastoral

But does this explain the power of the god representation to form and continue to determine the lives of believers? Furthermore, does it begin to explain the god representation who changes, grows, and develops as the individual goes through life, the god who is a supportive entity or the god who is destructive?⁵⁵ Furthermore, conceptualizing the Christian god as a transitional object as a means for determining god's role in the life of adherents is inadequate unless the concept is also used to refer to transitional mother representations and transitional father representations. However, the manner in which the women in Godsdienst en Incest talk about god is not as if god were a transitional object but as if god were their mother or father or any other person who let them down - and the letdown is worse. Furthermore, I have yet to come across a case study of trauma caused or focused in any way on betrayal of trust by a transitional object. The authors who use this tool for analysing the impact that the Christian god has on 'his' believers have to make too many

Psychology 39:1(1990), pp. 47-63.

⁵⁵Although it has some relevance, the thesis will not discuss the role of Satan, that which is considered by some Christian denominations to control evil, since this raises a different issue than the one in which we are primarily interested. For a discussion of the role of Satan see Lovinger, Working, David Bakan, "Psychological Characteristics of Man Projected in the Image of Satan" in On Method: Toward a Reconstruction of Psychological Investigation (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1969), pp. 160-9, and Mark Schoenberg, "Case report: The Devil-Priest Syndrome" American Journal of Psychotherapy 29(1975), pp. 134-7. See James Poling's discussion of god as that which has the capacity for good and evil, a result of his restructuring of Christian theology based on his work with child sexual assault offenders. Abuse of Power, pp. 173-82.

accommodations or exceptions to make it work as a generalized interpretive tool.

God as Object and Object Representation

Psychoanalytic theory and object relations theory appear to be generating salient and productive material for the study of religious issues both in the therapeutic situation and for understanding the importance of the development of religious beliefs, symbols and structures in an individual's personality construction.⁵⁶ The emergence of an object relational model offers some theoretical tools to help conceptualize the dynamism of a god representation, to conceive within someone's life history the inter-relationship between an object representation, a self-representation and feelings. This has been found to be useful in looking at the intra-psychic function of the god representation.⁵⁷ Within this model, god images and surrounding beliefs are considered to be internalized and, therefore, are an integral and dynamic ongoing part of the child's life experience. John McDargh, whose analysis of the development of faith is based securely in object relations theory, states that the god representation of psychologically healthy adults should bear some relationship to the

⁵⁶McDargh, Psychoanalytic, Rizzuto, Birth, Meissner, Life and Faith, Jones, Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion, David Wulff, Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches, (John Wylie & Sons, 199), pp. 253-410. Paul Pruyser, Between Belief and Unbelief (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), and Play.

⁵⁷McDargh, Psychoanalytic, p. 144.

personality of that adult. Furthermore, he suggests that if there is no foundation in someone's past to create a new idea of god, then this possibility will remain little more than an intellectual one.⁵⁸

However, none of the authors who are writing about development and the god representation begin their analysis by describing the characteristics of the god of the religious tradition with which they are working before they discuss development. Nonetheless, these characteristics should be viewed as an important factor in determining the environmental context through which the children organize their development and their relationship with their god.

Since I have just argued that the notion of god as a transitional object is inadequate, I will suggest in this section that there is a better way of using the object relations findings to interpret and understand the impact of the Christian god. This is to view the god relationship and thus the god representation as comparable to the mother or father representation. Given the enduring nature of the 'given god' and its characteristics, the Christian god is less like a transitional object and more like another human being, albeit an extremely powerful human being, with whom the child interacts.⁵⁹ In object relations theory, it is almost axiomatic to say that people and objects are both given and created by us. God may well be only a creation of the human mind, but for children who are believers, there is no question of the

⁵⁸McDargh, Psychoanalytic, p. 131-2.

⁵⁹See Pruyser, Play, pp. 158-63.

reality and existence of their god, and this reality can be forgotten if a fine balance is not maintained between a theoretical construction of a god representation and the reality of the Christian god as the child experiences it.

A god representation can be defined as the mental representation of the perceived subjective view of god. Rizzuto and Meissner seem to assume that all children develop a god representation, although Rizzuto qualifies this in the conclusion of her book, although the thrust of the argument in her book supports this assumption.⁶⁰ The idea that all children develop a god representation is certainly debatable. For example, in a non-believing family, the child's first contact with the idea of god will come from external sources which may or may not have any impact on the child. Robert Cole discusses the views of agnostic/atheistic children and their concerns in The Spiritual Life of Children. These children had similar concerns regarding life and death issues, for example, but their resources for dealing with the issues were different.⁶¹

The importance of the environment for the development of god

⁶⁰Rizzuto, Birth, p. 207, Meissner, Life and Faith. These two authors need to hold to this point since it relates to the development of a god who begins as a transitional object. It should also be noted that these authors are dependent on the Christian tradition and the Christian god construction for their analyses. Although they seem to advocate universality for their theory of the development of god representations, the development of god representations and their impact must necessarily be different for polytheistic cultures. The ethnocentric nature of their analyses is not explored, nor admitted. On the other hand, Pruyser is pervasively aware of cultural specificity, Play, p. 63.

⁶¹Cole, Spiritual, pp. 277-302.

representations is explicit in the discussion of religiously oriented, object relations theory models.⁶² In general, it is agreed that god representations are based on parental representations. There is also agreement that the parents' faith and convictions play a role in the child's evolving faith.⁶³ While it can be assumed that it is accepted that the god is part of the environment given to children to be 'found,' there is no discussion of the fact that the 'found' god comes with specific characteristics. Consequently there is little discussion of the characteristics of the god around whom (or which) children build their god representations.

In other words, the god image was not only a part of the environment of childhood but was given to the child with a specific personality. Yet, since in Christian families the god figure is a personal being who cares for the child on an individual basis either 'him'self or through mediators such as Jesus,⁶⁴ Mary,

⁶²Meissner, Life and Faith, pp. 20-38, Rizzuto, Birth, pp. 208-9, McDargh, Psychoanalytic, Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion trans. J. Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962(1927)), Wulff, Psychology of Religion, pp. 271-80, 341-44. See also M. O. Nelson, "The Concept of God and Feelings Toward Parents" Journal of Individual Psychology, 27(1971), pp. 46-49 for an account in which the image of god resembled the most favoured parent.

⁶³See R. L. Dudley, and M. G. Dudley, "Transmission of Religious Values From Parents to Adolescents" Review of Religious Research 28(September 1986), pp. 3-15.

⁶⁴I have added Jesus to this list of mediators since for many children the person of Jesus is separated from the person of the Christian God. For other children there may be no problem at all with the concept until adolescence. The ability to hold in balance the intricacies of the unity of the Holy Trinity is hard enough for theologians to grasp. Witness the preoccupation with trinitarian

saints, or a guardian angel, the personality of this god is an important factor in the subsequent development of the child.

Development of a God Representation

Christians by tradition believe in a god that has particular characteristics and expects certain things from them. As Lovinger points out, the actual existence of god or gods or goddesses is a moot point for therapists. If the client believes in the existence of god, then that need not be challenged, only worked with as part of the other significant beings in the client's life.⁶⁵ The idea of god and the beliefs of a religious community have both an individual meaning and a broader social meaning. The idea of god in the social context and broader community, however, has little impact on the earliest development of a child's god representation.

Since an "object representation" in object relations theory

debates in Christianity almost since its inception. This may be an indication that object constancy may not be a requirement for belief in the Christian God. (Object constancy is defined as "the ability to maintain a lasting relationship with a specific, single object." Charles Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada Limited, 1986(1968)), p.100.) In fact, the trinitarian concept (the three-in-one) may itself mitigate against the development of object constancy with respect to the Christian god.

⁶⁵Lovinger, Working. The need to explain the creation and development of a god representation, and the impact it has as it has developed in the object relations perspective can be viewed as a strange concern for religious writers. If anything, this is a highly reductionist theory of the religious notion of god. Authors who focus on this human development model are left with an interpretation that, in some ways, echoes Freud's "god as father-projection." The only difference is that god is now a mother-father-significant other projection. Rizzuto, Birth, pp. 208-9.

refers to the mental representation of an object, an object being a person, parts of persons, or symbols thereof,⁶⁶ behind object representations there must be 'real objects.' If object representations are the perceived subjective view of the real object, then behind the god representation, there must be a god object, i.e., in order to have a god representation there has to be a god, in other words an object, god, in relation to whom a child can create a subjective mental representation.⁶⁷

In discussing 'objects,' Rizzuto notes that believers partake in "the phenomena of actual belief in God as real, existing, alive, and interacting with the believer." This, she feels, makes God a truly amazing object, and furthermore "He is the only relevant object who has not undergone and cannot undergo reality testing."⁶⁸ Since Rizzuto uses the concept of transitional objects as a model for explaining god development, she makes further assumptions about what constitutes reality testing, i.e. what is necessary for

⁶⁶Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary, pp. 101-2, Greenberg and Mitchell.

⁶⁷I do not intend by this to be making any metaphysical statement about the existence of god. Rather, I would argue that children do not create god if the notion of god were not already there in the environment. Whether some one person at the dawn of sentience decided that there was a god, or whether god decided to manifest him/her/itself to humans for worship is of no importance to my analysis. I am only concerned with the traditional Christian god as he exists for believers, is transmitted to children, and the problems that this can cause for recovery from father-daughter sexual assault.

⁶⁸Rizzuto, Birth, p. 49. Emphasis added. This may be further reason for using "transitional object" to explain god representations.

reality testing to take place,⁶⁹ rather than analyzing what the 'phenomenon of actual belief' means in the lives of believers within the context of object relations theory.

Reality testing is explained in psychoanalytic thinking as

"the capacity to distinguish between mental images and external percepts, between phantasy and external reality, to correct subjective impressions by reference to external facts."⁷⁰

If people believe that there is an entity, god, who interacts in their lives and with whom they can have a relation, then their behaviour will be affected by this fact. One of the things that will happen is that the god will have to undergo reality testing if the relationship of the believer to her god is to develop and change. Reality testing begins during the individuation process of the child in relation to her mother or primary caretaker. The child who has a 'good enough mother'⁷¹ will slowly come to see that

⁶⁹The only way that Rizzuto can dismiss reality testing with reference to god is if she denies the external social power of the god. The lack of weight given to the external forces shaping the development of god representations permeates her analysis and allows her to make some very condescending inferences with reference to her clients' god representation (Rizzuto, Birth). See pages 171-3 above and note 49 on acceptable god representations. Without an acceptance that the god images her clients have, have had external validation, she does them a disservice, however simplistic the clients' god representations may appear to be to her.

⁷⁰Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary, p. 138.

⁷¹This is Winnicott's phrase for the relationship between the child and the mother, which in part refers to the fact that the all-perfect mother who met her child's needs at all times would actually be doing a disservice to the child. D. W. Winnicott, "Communication Between Infant and Mother, Mother and Infant, Compared and Contrasted" in What is Psychoanalysis? The Institute of Psycho-Analysis (London: Balliere, Tindall and Cassell, 1968). See the discussion in Davis and Wallbridge, Boundary.

the idealized, perfect, and indisputably powerful mother is only human. Her subjective view of her mother will change as she becomes more independent and as her motility increases and her sphere of influence expands. She will begin to see her mother in relation to other human beings and how they interact with her. She will begin to reevaluate her own relationship with the mother, and this will change the subjective perception of the mother. The broader the experiential base, the more her subjective views will be reality tested and will either confirm or challenge her subjective views. I would suggest that the Christian god can also be subject to reality testing, in both day-to-day experience and in traumatic situations.

When the parents have a reasonably pleasant god that is relatively free of the god of fire and damnation, the latter god representation will probably have a limited impact on the child's development.⁷² On the other hand, if the god of the parents is punitive, demanding, rigid and authoritarian, the parents are likely to be similar, and this will be the child's first god and will in all likelihood have a lasting primary impact; the god of love, hope and pleasantry will have little impact. But within the development process of object relations theory, the goal of

⁷²The questionable idea that the official Christian God is this acceptable loving one is analysed by Paul Pruyser in his descriptions of the god of his childhood, how he played with the god concept, and how his contact with the 'official God' - the one of hellfire and damnation - through the religious teachings in his school had little impact on his view of God. He was thankful that he had had room at home and in church in which to play with his concept of God as a child. Pruyser, Play, pp. 159-62, esp. 170.

development is individuation - the movement away from the will of the parents to the ability to function in a self-reliant manner. The good-enough parent watches as the child grows away from dependence and supports that movement unconditionally. Object relations theory suggests that in the early experiences of a child if there are no effective and affective roots of, for example, a loving, kind relationship, the intellectual reconstruction of the idea of a compassionate, loving and empathetic god will have little impact on the reconstruction of a god representation for an adult.⁷³

The process of separation, individuation and rapprochement can be accomplished with the mother or primary caretaker. During the rapprochement phase the mother representation and the real mother have been blended. The child begins to lose some of her limited understanding of 'mother' and replaces it with a more realistic notion of 'mother.' The same process would occur with the father and father representation to a greater or lesser degree, depending on his involvement in the child's life.

What is important is that the person who has developed a god representation believes that there is a god who exists behind the representation. God is not an object or entity who resides in the transitional sphere, the area where fantasy exists and reality can be suspended. Conceptually, therefore, viewing the god as a third parent in the family dynamics will also better explain the role that the god-representation plays in the lives of believers.

⁷³Cf. McDargh, Psychoanalytic, pp. 124-32.

Traditionally, Christians behave towards god as if 'he' were a person. The vicissitudes of one's relationship with the Christian god are similar to the relationship with one's parents or other humans. The construction of the relationship, and, consequently, its impact on someone depends on how close god is to that person. The relationship, if close, bears the resemblance to the parents; if distant, it resembles the relationship one has with an uncle seen once a year. The biggest problem in all the works on object relations theory and religion, when the development of the god representation is discussed, is that not enough emphasis is placed on this 'given' factor of the original existence of a god. The Christian god is first and even foremost anthropomorphic - to the extent that the god becomes a male human being. It is with this given anthropomorphic, male god that most Christian children first relate and around whom a god representation develops.⁷⁴ Just as the child has to deal with the real mother and father and adjust, so the child has to deal with the real god and adjust. And they can get the real god only from the social context, i.e. the family and religious environment.

⁷⁴"Objects" can sometimes be problematic for people working with object relations theory. Calling people "objects" can be considered a reification of human beings. However, "objects" refers to the subjective experience of others that humans have from infancy onwards. Objects can also refer to the internalized experience of others and can even be part-objects when someone has focussed on only part of the personality of the other. Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, James Masterson, The Narcissistic and Borderline Disorders (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1982).

God and the Christian Environment

In most Christian denominations, babies are baptized into the community of believers. This sets the environmental context for the child-rearing presuppositions of the family. This acknowledges the existence of god. The existence of, and existing relationship with, this god presupposes that the parents of the child already have a notion of god and of the importance of making a connection among the child, the god and the community of believers, thereby giving a structure and meaning to the child's life. This is a finer distinction than that of McDargh's position "that the faith of the child has its foundation and origins in the faith of the parenting others."⁷⁵ If the god is a central figure in the home environment, then the god representation will be powerful. That god can be a god of love or a god of hellfire and damnation, or anything in between, but it almost assuredly is a god who watches over the child and knows always what the child is not only doing but also thinking in her most private moments.⁷⁶ It is only if a god is first a part of the environment that a god representation can begin to appropriate accretions based on parental and other individual representations as well as from the stories told the child at bedtime and at Sunday School or church. Later, this representation can be changed by doctrines and other forms of intellectualizations, as well. But the god representation that the

⁷⁵McDargh, Psychoanalytic, p. 216.

⁷⁶Meissner, Life and Faith.

child is given will reflect, at least initially, the parents' positive relationship with, or their unresolved problems with, their god.

The primary analogy for viewing the relationship between the Christian god and believers has been that of the family with believers as the god's children and god as the father. If this analogy is to work, modern notions of child development and the functioning of the family that have as a primary value the idea that growth leads to the autonomous individual in relationship,⁷⁷ should be applied to the relationship between god and children. However, as our knowledge of both constructive and destructive child-rearing practices has increased, this has not led to any significant change in the traditional concept of the Christian god. At the core of the Christian concept of its god, we have a father who willingly subjects his son to humiliation, torture and death for the greater good. As interpreted by Christianity, Jesus went willingly to his death with only a murmur of discontent, but in the end bowed to the will of the father.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Masterson, Search. See Jones, Contemporary, Poling, Abuse of Power.

⁷⁸Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds, Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), pp. 1-30, Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 168-73.

Characteristics of the Christian god

The first important characteristic of the Christian god, particularly if we are to understand its impact, is that this god has been anthropomorphized, that is, has been given human characteristics. In Christianity, despite over a quarter of a century of criticism, the fact remains that for most Christians, the anthropomorphic characteristics of this god are male and he is seen as a father figure. The god father and his relationship with his believers is the model for the Christian family, and the father, most clearly from a biological standpoint, was created in the image of God. From picture books of the bible to stained glass windows, the Christian god, not just Jesus, is portrayed as male. Therefore, God and father become inextricably intertwined in the minds of many Christian children. This leads to the analogy that if what god does is right, therefore, what the father does is right. The primary record of god's action in history and people's individual lives - what the god does or does not do, what the god punishes, what the god rewards, even how the god feels, is in the bible - the old and new testaments as they are known in Christianity.⁷⁹

God is given to children from earliest childhood through prayers, baptism and bedtime stories, pictures in the churches and in the books. In western Christianity and society, the myth has

⁷⁹A. Roger Gobbel and Gertrude G. Gobbel, The Bible: A Child's Playground (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

been that the primary protector of childhood is the father. God as father is the ultimate protector, loving and all-powerful.⁸⁰ This god is all seeing, all knowing, all good. Everything is under 'his' control. Nothing happens that god does not know about and does not participate in. As a consequence, if god is in total control, and something happens, then it must be for a reason and therefore, acceptable to god. Furthermore, the god is unchanging - the same today as he was yesterday and he will be tomorrow. Therefore, he is to be counted on, a stable centre in a chaotic world where everything changes.

Meissner always refers to god as 'he' even though he will say that god picks up characteristics from both parents - the child relates god more to father with the power differential being understood during the 'Oedipal phase'. Meissner, who is a Freudian apologist, holds that there is a natural development towards the male god figure.⁸¹ During adolescence Meissner notes that girls

⁸⁰Meissner goes over and over this in several of his works. But as a descriptive analysis, Freud's discussion of the religion of the father and the son as it functioned was probably accurate for the nineteenth century it describes. It is Freud's attempt to accord universality to his insight into Jewish/Christian patriarchal religion by way of descriptions, attribution of causes, interpretation of religion's function in the lives of people, and his analysis of the future from this fact that are problematic. Meissner, Psychoanalysis.

⁸¹Meissner, Life and Faith, pp. 31-33. One should note that once again, it is the mother's responsibility if the development of the god representation does not proceed in the proper fashion. "To the extent that the child's early experience with the mother has tipped the balance in the direction of more positive and gratifying experiences, a sense of trust is laid down that provides a foundation for the later development of a sense of trusting faith in the relationship with God. Where early infantile experience is discoloured by insecurity, uncertainty, or anxiety, the foundation

differ in their attributes of god from boys - boys tend to emphasize objectively idealized qualities⁸² and for the girl, god becomes the 'ideal confidante' (interestingly, a confidante of the opposite sex).⁸³ Finally, "The child progresses from a naive trust in God to a fuller understanding of his majesty, transcendence, and power, which are to be approached only with fear and reverence."⁸⁴

I believe that this can be a useful explanation for what happens with the Christian god representation. The god of this religious system comes with many attributions. He is a fixed category⁸⁵ given to children primarily through their family and their church community. The attributes given to this god is that of a loving father, a punishing father, an all-knowing father, an all-seeing father, an all-powerful father, a never changing father. In other words, an omnipresent, personalized, and individualized father who cares for his children and watches over them as he does

is laid for a mistrust that can contaminate and distort the later experience of God." (p. 31).

⁸²Meissner is influenced by the work of Lawrence Kohlberg on moral development theory which is also instrumental in the construction of Fuller's work which is a basis for Meissner's Life and Faith, pp. 304, 306. See James Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981). For a critique of Kohlberg's work, see Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁸³Meissner, Life and Faith p. 36.

⁸⁴Meissner, Life and Faith, p. 33. Emphasis added.

⁸⁵A "fixed category" is a category that doesn't allow for any reinterpretation - something that has necessary and sufficient conditions for being a member of that category [anything to be subsumed under that category].

the lilies of the field and the sparrows.

In the earlier discussion of the bible and the problem of father-daughter incest, it was discovered that the biblical literature had little to say about the nature of the act or about men who abuse their daughters. These men are not punished for the behaviour of abusing their daughter and the daughters are left to handle the grief and social consequences on their own. In the same chapter, the lessons to be learned from the Maria Goretti story are more damaging. Daughters learn that they must be quiet and that they bear responsibility for a sexual assault. They learn that they must be obedient and that they must die rather than lose their virginity.

Rizzuto comments that in two of her case studies the patients' god representations had been so negative and fearsome that by the time they came into contact with 'the official God' of religion, this official god could be of no help in allaying the children's fears or in changing the fearsome god representation which she argues had been based on parental representations.⁸⁶ In failing to consider that, in all probability, these children were given - in one case, Bernadine Fisher, certainly⁸⁷ - a punishing god with which to interact and that punishment is part of what the Christian

⁸⁶There was no way they could "tease out an acceptable God representation." Rizzuto, *Birth*, p. 199, emphasis added. She does not fully explain why not. Within her own parameters, a discussion of transitional sphere oppression (negativity in the transitional sphere) might have helped explain the problem. However this would have mitigated against her view that god, as a special transitional object, is under the control of the individual.

⁸⁷Rizzuto, *Birth*, pp. 149-73.

god does, Rizzuto fails to see that the 'official God' of Christianity met their expectations and supported their construction of who god was.

In her discussion of rape as an unnatural act,⁸⁸ Marie Fortune argues that an assumption of sexual violence as part of the natural order requires "an understanding of God as one who is hostile and cruel" in creating "two classes of persons - the victims and the victimizers."⁸⁹ She goes on to say that "Nothing in the core of Jewish or Christian beliefs can substantiate this conception of God's nature or human nature."⁹⁰ On the other hand, James Poling's work with child sexual assault victims and child abusers has led him to the belief that there is a great ambiguity within the Christian god in relationship to believers.⁹¹ At the core of the biblical revelation concerning the nature of this god is a god who is at times angry, who has regrets, who can be kind and loving, but at times is given to favoritism.⁹² This god is an ambiguous god and believers must live with that ambiguity and learn from it.⁹³

From the beginning in Genesis to Revelation at the end, the Christian god who is erratic, violent and punishing and periodically forgiving and caring is more easily accessible and

⁸⁸Fortune, Sexual Violence, pp. 113-20.

⁸⁹Fortune, Sexual Violence, p. 119.

⁹⁰Fortune, Sexual Violence, p. 119, emphasis added.

⁹¹Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 153-82.

⁹²Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 181-2.

⁹³Poling, Abuse of Power, pp. 162-4.

verifiable by the official scriptures than is the loving, caring god that people want to believe in. Generally speaking, the Christian god can be seen as a loving, personal, involved, empathetic, rigidly authoritarian, punishing, demanding and controlling god all at once. A god who is all things to all people at all times. *But most of all God is HE.* A religion that founds itself on a holy scripture that bears all of these possibilities for its god will not see in its believers symptoms of mental health disorders when they hold these views about their god. Rather, they will be seen as holding a correct and mature view of god in its societal context until something goes wrong, as, for example, when the upstanding Christian father is guilty of sexual intercourse with his daughter.

In this chapter, it has been shown that the theoretical model of god as a transitional object has a number of problems which limits its usefulness for understanding the impact of the relationship between god and believers in traumatic situations such as father-daughter incest. It is suggested, then, that an alternate way of interpreting the data should be used in order to better understand the impact of this god in trauma. God should be viewed much more as a third parent with a personality of 'his' own that will have to be confronted in the therapeutic situation. The next chapter will explore the ramifications of this suggestion as it pertains to the recovery process for the father-daughter incest victim as she moves towards becoming a survivor of incest.

CHAPTER SIX
CHRISTIANITY AND IMPEDIMENTS TO RECOVERY
From Victim to Survivor

"Father," for me, is the most frightening name
for God I can possibly think of.¹

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I proposed comparing the Christian god to a third parent who interacts with the child. This would mean that the personality of the god would be important in determining how a daughter would give meaning to sexual assault by her father. I discussed the characteristics of the particularly anthropomorphized and concrete form god of traditional Christianity. It is with this particularly human or supra-human god that the Christian daughter who is a victim of father-daughter sexual assault will have a close relationship.

In this chapter, the discussion will revolve around how a sexually abused Christian daughter will understand her relationship with her god and how it could affect the recovery process. Some of the key issues instrumental in recovering from father-daughter sexual assault will be discussed. The focus will be on issues of

¹Jennifer, "Jennifer's Story: From Anger to Honesty" Faith Today: Canada's Evangelical Newsfeature Magazine (Nov/Dec 1986), p. 21.

suffering, guilt, anger and forgiveness. They are relevant to recovery from sexual assault and figure prominently in the Christian weltanschauung. I will consider how those issues are enunciated in Christianity and what their possible effects on the recovery process may be.

Becoming a Survivor of Father-Daughter Sexual Assault

Recovery issues are many for the incest victim. The primary and overriding issue is that of the inability to trust. This inability to trust has an impact on every facet of a victim's life. In learning to trust herself, in learning to trust others, and in learning to trust her god if she is a Christian, she will learn to function as a motivated, creative individual.

Recovery means understanding that as vile, uncaring, unfeeling and evil some people are and have been, not all people are like that. Once that can be understood, she will be able to become involved in relationships with other human beings in a caring positive manner without giving up her sense of self and her personal integrity.

Recovery means no longer blaming herself for the abuse, no longer punishing herself for something that was outside of her control, understanding that being in the wrong place, at the wrong time, being born into a family with a sexually abusive father was not her fault, it was an accident of fate. Recovery means acceptance of the past without the denial of its negative, hurtful

impact but with the understanding that it no longer has to control the present and the future.

Recovery means understanding that as a daughter, there was no real possibility to control or affect the abusive father or to control or affect the abusive environment in which she lived. What she will learn during therapy is that much of her negative behavioural patterns are the product of learned behaviour, defense mechanisms designed to help her survive the abuse when she was a child. Those defence mechanisms used to survive the abuse were the only means available to her in her fight for survival. However, the lessons learned back then can be unlearned. There is no written way of portraying the painful process that reliving the past, confronting her beliefs about the past and reorganizing her life for the future is. As difficult as it is, though, she must learn, as best she can, that she now has control over her life and her own behaviour. The past cannot be changed, but she can start to take responsibility for the future. These defence mechanisms have outlived their usefulness as survival tactics and have become a hindrance to living. During the recovery process, they can be given up without fear and new forms of life skills can be learned.

For a full recovery from the effects of child sexual abuse, the first and foremost problem to be resolved is the guilt and self-blame felt by the incest survivor. This is not an easy task and involves the ripping apart and reliving of the past and then starting a reintegration of her personality. It involves a fundamental restructuring of the survivor's view of the abuser and

other people who were involved in her life at the time of the abuse - views which have been carried from childhood into the adult's life and worldview, often virtually intact.

The recovery process is complicated by the fact that there are often feelings of love for the perpetrator. This love is related to the relationship with the abuser that is separate from the sexual abuse. Not all abusers are physically violent men who terrorize their families.² This is the genesis of the split relationship with the perpetrator of the abuse. To the daughter, the manipulation that the father used to gain the acquiescence of the child is indistinguishable from love. To acknowledge the manipulation brings into question whatever order the adult victim has created to survive.

The search for 'what I did wrong' has to be let go and replaced with the acceptance that the abuser was solely responsible for the abuse, the daughter is only responsible for what she will do about the rest of her life. Getting to that stage is a long and arduous process for most daughters. Therapy starts with understanding that she is not alone, that she has a safe and secure place in which to tell her story. The following chart taken from Donaldson and Gardner's "Traumatic Stress"³ is a useful

²This does not make it any easier to recover. In fact it may make therapy more difficult.

³Mary Ann Donaldson and Russell Gardner, Jr., "Diagnosis and Treatment of Traumatic Stress Among Women After Childhood Incest" in Charles R. Figley, ed., Trauma and Its Wake: The Study and Treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Publishers, 1985), p. 372.

recapitulation of the reconceptualizations that women who were traumatized by incest have to undergo during the recovery process.

TABLE I
RECONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF STRESS RESPONSES

CATEGORY	STRESS RESPONSE	RECONCEPTUALIZATION
Fear and Anxiety	I'm afraid I will always be alone. I'm afraid I'm losing my mind. Other people will hurt me.	I can have close relationships. I need not be alone. I can control my emotional behavior, I won't go crazy. I can protect myself now.
Anger and Frustration	I hate myself-I let this happen. I hate my mother-she didn't protect me. I hate my father-I want to hurt him.	I am not a bad person, I no longer blame myself. My mother disappointed me, but I no longer hate her. My father is responsible for the sexual abuse, but I can stop hating him.
Guilt and Remorse	I am responsible for the incest-I caused it. I am being punished for being a bad person. I shouldn't feel so angry and hateful.	I am not responsible for the incest-I was a victim. I do not understand fully why the incest happened, but I was not being punished for being bad. I have a right to feel angry.
Shame and Self-disgust	I will always be helpless. I cannot control my life. I am not confident in myself, I don't trust myself. I cannot trust anyone.	I can exert control in many areas of my life. I need not be a victim in all areas. I feel confident in some areas of my life, I trust myself. I can trust some people.
Sadness	I lost my childhood. I cannot feel, I am empty.	I lost a lot, but not everything. I can salvage some relationships. I can feel, I'm not empty.

Recovery in a Christian Context

For a child raised with a traditional Christian upbringing, the relationship between the father and the god is a very close-

knit and personal one. Yet little attention has been given to the specifics of the 'god the father' image on the psychological development of the female child and specifically on the sexually abused female.⁴ Christian beliefs and symbols are part of the environmental context of the Christian child's development. Children in Christian environments are given specific views of how their relationship with God, Jesus, family, should evolve. All of these views will interact and inform the development of the incest victim and survivor into adulthood. It is the hypothesis of this dissertation that an incest survivor from a Christian environment will have an extremely difficult time resolving the abuse. This would be the case whether the child retains her Christianity into adulthood or not. For example, the religious material and its affective impact can also be repressed along with the other realities of the abuse. Fitted into this developmental process are the religious beliefs of the family and the environment - the words, actions, symbols that form part of the explanations of what the world is about and which must be used to make sense of the raw data with which she is living and must live through. Specific doctrines will impede development of the understanding needed to deal with the betrayal of trust, the pain and anguish that will accompany the reliving of a painful past particularly since the belief system itself has created the groundwork for, and the form taken in, the search for meaning in the abuse.

⁴Mary Lou Randour and Julie Bondanza, "The Concept of God in the Psychological Formation of Females," Psychoanalytic Psychology 4(1987), pp. 301-13.

Repression, blocking, projection, idealization, splitting, total dissociation are all psychological mechanisms or tools which are used by the developing child in order to survive sexual abuse. Since a child can only make sense of the experiences she is having within the context of her own family environment, these mechanisms will be used differently in each case in order that she can survive in a world that she does not understand.

What this chapter will discuss is the function of guilt, anger, forgiveness, suffering, as defenses against feeling the pain of the father's betrayal.⁵ Part of the therapeutic process is to break through these defenses in order to proceed with the healing of the damaged self. When the defenses are justified and supported by the religious system, blocks in therapy occur. Theologians and Christian apologists through the ages have had specific things to say about these issues of guilt, anger, forgiveness and suffering, and have organized worldviews in order to explain the problem of sin in the world of an all good-god. It is these explanations (as seen in their most basic form⁶ which is how children would hear and appropriate them) that will be used to describe how they act as impediments in the process of recovery.

⁵Furthermore, the greater the failure of the developmental process, the more intense any reaction will be and the more difficult coping with sexual assault would be.

⁶Reliance on biblical material as it is, or in expurgated versions that leave out the 'nasty stuff,' is how many children receive the belief system. In Roman Catholicism, this is augmented and often overshadowed by the traditional material, such as the relationship with a personal saint. Roger A. Gobbel and Gertrude G. Gobbel, The Bible: A Child's Playground (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

Christianity and Therapy

Christianity is a religion whose weltanschauung is in part based on polar opposites, things are black or white with little room for the grays. For this reason, this theological system can hinder the recovery of incest victims/survivors. Good and bad can be split between god and the Devil. Life is seen as a battle between the forces of good and evil. At the personal level, the Christian must always be fighting the bad impulses within her/himself. This fight cannot be carried on alone. In fact, it is crucial to the Christian that since the human is born in a state of sin the individual cannot control the impulse towards evil without the help of the 'grace of God,' symbolized concretely by the saving death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the atonement of the evil nature inherent in all human beings. Part of the process for overcoming personal responsibility for evil is a) the admission that one is helpless in the face of personal and impersonal evil and the inevitability of committing sin, and b) the turning over of the responsibility for curing the pain in one's life to the god of Christianity without whom there is no hope for personal peace, happiness and salvation.

It is often said that many patients with personality disorders come to therapy to 'feel better,' not to 'get better.'⁷ Their defence structures have been organized to help them to avoid

⁷James Masterson, The Search For The Real Self: Unmasking the Personality Disorders of Our Age, (London: The Free Press, 1988).

overwhelming abandonment feelings. Christianity can subvert the therapeutic process since it offers these individuals a way to 'feel better' without going through the difficult therapeutic process of confrontation with the past.

Often the religious writings and counselling materials include the development of a more 'realistic' or 'real' god representation as part of the expected optimal outcome of therapy. Sometimes part of the realism includes dependency on the Christian god. Nowhere is this stated more clearly than in a recent article which suggests that the therapist act as a transitional object to god.⁸ The rationale for this is that by being the 'good-enough' therapist on whom a patient becomes dependent, the Christian therapist can then help the patient to transfer that dependency onto the perfect 'all good' Christian god. This then would be the ultimate goal of Christian therapy, and successful transfer of dependency from therapist to god would indicate a positive and complete outcome.⁹ The idea that this 'dependency' is the desired outcome of therapy is a problem for incest victims where the emphasis in therapy is on learning how to participate in egalitarian relationships. This is also a far cry from the desired objectives of therapeutic outcome

⁸Gualtiere, W. J., "The Christian Psychotherapist as a Transitional Object to God" Journal of Psychology and Theology, 18:2(1990), pp. 131-40.

⁹This is a yet another misapplication of the concept of transitional phenomena. See Winnicott on the therapist as part of the transitional phenomena. "The aims of psychoanalytic treatment," in D. W. Winnicott, The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1965), p. 166.

in, for example, James Masterson, where optimum recovery would be accomplished when the patient can convert the energy used for maintenance of defenses against the abandonment depression into living life actively and being able to utilize her or his innate capacity to develop, be creative and mature.¹⁰

Trauma and the Christian God

Trauma occurs when there is a clash of perceptions, a conflict between competing systems of meaning.¹¹ "To label an event traumatic is to assert that it happened to the subject, without his in any way willing it or colluding in its occurrence ..., and its effects are causally determined consequences."¹² Traumatized children have to make choices in order to relieve anxiety and loss of meaning.¹³ For without meaning, life isn't worth living.

¹⁰Masterson, Search.

¹¹Jerome Kagan, The Nature of the Child (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1984).

¹²Charles Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, Canada, 1986(1968)), p. 170. Perhaps one of the reasons child sexual assault was not named trauma was the assumption that due to unresolved sexual wishes on the part of the child, there was 'unconscious motivation or collusion' in the sexual assault. Therefore, if trauma did occur, its genesis had to come from somewhere else such as society's rules. Furthermore, since many of the behaviours which sexually abused children exhibit have not been seen until recently to be 'causally determined consequences' of child sexual assault, the term trauma and traumatic effects were not used in relationship to antisocial behaviours exhibited by sexually abused children.

¹³Violet Madge, Children in Search of Meaning: A study of religious and scientific thought and enquiry arising from experience in the primary school years (New York: Morehouse-Barlow,

In therapy, patients who were raised as believers have to come to terms with the god of their childhood the same way they have to come to terms with their parents. This is particularly important when the god representation is used to mediate the relationship between a child and her parents and other significant adults. It is only in viewing the god of the Christian child as similar to the parents that one can begin to understand and focus on the impact of the Christian god in trauma. Children have a great need to believe in their parents and they will do almost anything to maintain their idealized image of their parents and the idea that their parents love them rather than try to deal with the chaos that underlies the alternate choice - that their parents are bad, hateful or harmful. In father-daughter incest, one of the problems encountered is the idea that the father's behaviour was right. Whatever he did, he did because he was the parent on whom the daughter depended and loved. The daughter was, and is, unable to evaluate him or his behaviours objectively. Whatever the father did is justified and is therefore OK, particularly if it was for her own good.

Intellectualization cannot deal with the powerful effect of the god of a Christian child, anymore than understanding and intellectualizing the parents' failures will get rid of the pain, hurt and loss that those failures have caused. It is only in viewing the god of the Christian child as on par with the parents that the impact of the relationship with the Christian god in

Co., 1965), R. L. Silver, C. Boon and M. H. Stones, "Searching for Meaning in Misfortune: Making Sense of Incest" Journal of Social Issues 39 (1983), pp. 81-102.

traumatic situations can begin to be understood. Rizzuto argues that god images are not frozen into fossils.¹⁴ In a reasonably normal process of development the understanding of the god images and belief structures will change as the child's capabilities change from concrete thinking to the ability to think abstractly and symbolically. However, when there is severe trauma, certain facets of emotional and psychological development will be halted.¹⁵ Since the god image is one of these facets in a child brought up religiously, the perceptions of the god image and the belief system can undergo change or can be frozen. The god representation of an adult who is a child sexual assault victim can often resemble the god representation of a child. This is so whether the belief in that god has been rejected or whether the person is still a believer. It is possible that the god image of a Christian traumatized child will be frozen at the time of the sexual abuse and will share in all the defence mechanisms constructed to deal with the abuse.

In a believing family, the Christian god will play a role in the child's attempt to search for meaning in the traumatic events. The understanding of the god and the religious structures surrounding the belief in that god will give some of the answers, negative or positive, to the quest for meaning. It will also have

¹⁴Ana Marie Rizzuto, The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Approach, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁵Christopher Bagley and Kathleen King, Child Sexual Abuse (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1990).

an impact on the way in which the relationships that the child and the adult she becomes has with her god and with other people. As argued above, the relationship with the god image can be as strong and capable of emotional attachment as the relationship with the parents. Therefore, this god representation will cause the same affect as do the memories of the parents. The beliefs surrounding this god will be viewed within the context of interpersonal relationships. If the belief system is found wanting, the god who is believed to have proposed that belief structure will also be found wanting or will be blindly followed no matter what the facts.

Trauma disrupts the worldview of the traumatized person. Therefore it is only logical that the god image will also be disrupted when trauma occurs in a Christian environment because god will be integrally involved in the trauma. The impact of the accumulation of trauma such as incest can be strong enough to seriously impair the development of the god image or cause the god image to die. Sometimes the god must be rejected in order for the child to survive and begin the construction of a positive self-image. A re-creation of the god image may then be possible.¹⁶

On the other hand, depending on the specifics of the individual case, the traumatic experience can result in the death of god. The imagery of cancer could be used to explain what happens. If the cancer is discovered and treated in time, it may not be fatal. However, the same cancer, if untreated, can cause

¹⁶Annie Imbens-Fransen and Ineke Jonker, Godsdienst en incest: de Horstink i.s.m. de Vereniging tegen Seksuele Kindermishandeling binnen het Gezin (Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1985).

death. For other types of cancer there is no cure. In the same way, one could argue that some experiences are so damaging to the god representation, or have been left unresolved for such a long time, that god will not survive the trauma. If a member of the family dies, and this is often a very traumatic event, there is a funeral and a period of socially supported grieving. However, the impact of the parent on the surviving children does not cease immediately because the parent has died. While there is no longer any face-to-face contact, life goes on without that person and, if grief is allowed to run its course, an evaluation of the positive and negative facets of the relationship can take place. However, when god dies, no one holds a funeral. There are no socially sanctioned rituals to accompany the loss of the dead god. No grief is allowed at the loss of the good things that the god and belief in the god entailed. Usually there is only anger, rejection and denial of the reality of that god's effect and impact on the life of the traumatized adult. The loss of the Christian god can be devastating since it will also mean the loss of the entire system of meaning - of making sense of the world. All the boundaries can become fluid, and right and wrong lose their meaning and justification. That loss can be great because it also means the loss of community, loss of the structuring of one's life, loss of certainty and loss of trust.

This is evident in the stories told by nine of the ten women

interviewed in Godsdienst en Incest.¹⁷ They tell of a relationship with God fraught with problems and of a deity who is hard to shake. What is clear from their stories is that their Christian god is a very concretized and embodied male person who is not subject to change. All but one of these women have left their religion of upbringing.¹⁸ In order to survive, they had to leave in order to escape the oppression of the god of their childhood and his religious belief system. This god was too interwoven with their abuse experiences to be able to help in any positive manner, for example, in the relief of personal guilt and anxiety. They could not come to terms with that oppressive, punishing male God whom they perceive to be allied with their male abusers and remain in the system.

The following sections of this chapter will focus on different aspects of the therapeutic concerns for the daughter and the problems she will face when these concerns meet the traditional positions of Christianity on these issues.

Christianity and Sexuality

Generally speaking, attitudes towards sexuality in

¹⁷Imbens-Fransen has organized the data into charts which describe how each of the women saw their relationship with their families and with the Christian god. Imbens-Fransen, Godsdienst, pp. 160-73.

¹⁸Diana Russell had a similar finding. See page 91, above, for her data.

Christianity have been noted for their negativity.¹⁹ Furthermore, it has been suggested that these attitudes actually breed the sexual violence endemic in western society.²⁰ After the fourth century legacy of Augustine, sexuality or rather the vilification of human sexuality, became a focal point for western Christian moral theology.²¹ It was inextricably linked with body/soul dualism and the view that 'sex' is bad and therefore so is the body with its uncontrollable and insatiable sexual urges. The 'original sin' of Adam and Eve became linked to sexuality as the means

¹⁹There has always been a positive interpretative thread within Christianity towards the body and sexuality based on primarily Old Testament anthropology. However it is a thin thread that has barely survived the onslaught of its two rival interpretations. See Peter Gardella, Innocent Ecstasy: How Christianity Gave America an Ethic of Sexual Pleasure (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), for a succinct description of the positive interpretation and its possible, though limited, results within Christianity.

²⁰Marie Fortune, Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981(1978)). Margaret R. Miles, "Violence Against Women in the Historical Christian West and in North American Secular Culture: The Visual and Textual Evidence," in C. Atkinson, C. H. Buchanan and M. Miles, eds., Shaping New Vision: Gender and Values in American Culture, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 11-29. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole Bohn, eds, Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989). John A. Phillips, Eve: The History of an Idea (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

²¹Eric Fuchs, Sexual Desire & Love: Origins and History of the Christian Ethic of Sexuality and Marriage, trans. Marsha Daigle, (New York: Seabury Press, 1983(Originally published as Le Desir et La Tendresse, 1979)), James B. Nelson, Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology, (Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979(1978)), John T. Noonan, Jr., Contraception: a History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists, enlarged edition, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), Gardella, Innocent Ecstasy, John Money, The Destroying Angel: Sex, Fitness & Food in the Legacy of Degeneracy Theory, Graham Crackers, Kellogg's Corn Flakes & American Health History, (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1985).

through which the sin was passed on from generation to generation. This negative view of humanity that was given its framework and strength from Augustine of Hippo became the driving force that resulted in the view that sex was bad and lust was the unavoidable and uncontrollable legacy of Adam and Eve's sin. The interesting point is that although generally speaking, women have been blamed for every sin from 'original' on,²² original sin must be transferred hereditarily through the male since Mary (and conceivably her mother Anne?) could conceive children without sin when conception did not involve sperm (even if Augustine would say it was the lust that caused the sin, lust being a feeling not a hereditary commodity). There are many strange things concerning the conception and birth of Jesus that are themselves peculiar and may contribute to the hiding and acceptance of the sexual abuse of children. A United Church minister put a question to me during a discussion of the thesis topic: "What I could never understand was, how God could rape a young girl?" Mary was afraid and then of course agreed(Luke). How could she refuse God and would he have taken 'no' for an answer?

The standard position of Christian thinking is that sexual activity must be reserved for the marriage relationship. Implicitly, if not more often explicitly, this means that a woman (and less emphatically, a man) must come to the marriage bed as a virgin and (implicitly) with limited sexual knowledge. On many levels, then, this is impossible for the daughter who has been

²²Phillips, Eve.

sexually abused by her father. For one thing, she can no longer meet the demands of her religious system that she come to marriage a virgin. She has furthermore got a father who preaches one thing and is often perceived by the outside world as an exemplary Christian and behaves within the family in complete contradiction to his stated beliefs.

If there is one thing that is almost axiomatic about rearing children, it is that they imitate their parents. This shows itself most consistently in the generational nature of family violence.²³ During the teen years, there is a great emphasis on hypocrisy. At this point, adolescents are very concerned with whether the parents 'Do as I say and not as I do' rears its head. If they haven't already done so, young people will often focus on the questions of adult behaviour and insist that parents "practice what they preach!" If there is a strong disparity between the parents' behaviour and their explicit and implicit moral positions, conflict can arise as well as confusion. When a father sexually abuses his daughter, one of the immediate results is the focus on the distance between the attitudes of Christian beliefs towards sexuality with which she has been raised and the betrayal which has occurred

²³To counter this trend, yet based on the fact that child-rearing methods are passed through generations is one of the treatment rationales of Steele and Pollack who state that "therapeutic intervention in a process which seems to pass from one generation to the next will hopefully produce changes in patterns of child rearing toward the lessening of unhappiness and tragedy." B. F. Steel and C. B. Pollack, "A Psychiatric Study of Parents Who Abuse Infants and Small Children" in R. E. Helfer and C. H. Kempe, eds, The Battered Child (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 131.

between what is happening and what is supposed to be the way Christians behave. In the abstract, a Christian context for father-daughter incest will conceivably render the resulting trauma greater than that of a non-Christian because the behaviour of the father is clearly outside the accepted boundaries of Christian behaviour with regard to sexual matters, setting the daughter up for a dissonance which must somehow be resolved.

The dissonance set up can be enormous. The daughter will feel herself unclean and unable to participate in her religious community. However, because she must remain silent about the abuse in order that she can remain in the community, she then will feel like a liar and a cheat, unworthy to be part of the community. Participating in the rituals thereby becomes an occasion of sin rather than one of healing. If she has blocked the abuse, the 'unworthiness' can be there, nevertheless, and can be named piety. The sense of unworthiness will be working as a defense against knowledge. However, since a sense of unworthiness is the proper stance to take vis-a-vis the god of Christianity, no warning bells will go off signalling a problem to those around her.

One of the most noticeable things about child sexual abuse victims is the lack of a sense of self and the discomfort with the body and sexuality that survivors have. In some cases there is separation of the body from self, particularly noticeable in those who become promiscuous and/or turn to prostitution in order to survive. At the same time, there can often be a pronounced lack of sexual desire. Either way, there are extremes and obsessions with

sex that are noticeable in the victims and if nothing else Christianity has been obsessed, through the ages, with the same extremes. What a daughter who has been sexually assaulted by her father finds in the tradition is support for her lack of sexual feelings, and that this lack is an appropriate reaction for a model female.

Christianity and Authority

The next biblical concept, ... is that within the child's nature is a bent toward good and a bent toward evil. It is up to Christian parents to unbend their children's tendency toward evil. The following Scriptures make this concept very clear: "I was brought forth in iniquity, / And in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5); "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, / But the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). Proverbs 29:15, "A child left to himself brings shame to his mother," also reinforces the concept that a child has an inherent bent toward evil.²⁴

Margaret Mahler has said of the rapprochement experience of childhood, that sharing and seeking to share, characterize the emergence of true autonomy in healthy maturation.²⁵ Authority and

²⁴William Sears, Christian Parenting and Child Care (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), pp. 273-4. "The very qualities we instill in our children; loving one another, respecting adults, being kind to all and obeying authority figures, are the "handles" that the molester, the pornographer and the deviate would use to destroy our children." Dr. William Katz, Parents Teaching Guide to Protecting Your Children From Sexual Assault (Toronto: Little Ones Books, 1984) p. 8. Emphasis added.

²⁵Margaret Mahler with K. La Perrier, "Mother-child interaction during separation-individuation" in Selected Papers of Margaret Mahler, Vol. 2, 1965, p. 39. See Karla Clark and Candace Orcutt, "The Masterson Approach and the Supervisory Process" in Masterson and Klein, Psychotherapy, pp. 422-46. This article highlights the

the power that it implies should never be arbitrarily used but should be mainly functional in the service of growth. It is in allowing the child to follow her natural inclinations to explore, challenge and create, that the healthy human personality emerges. The arbitrary use of authority to impede the child's natural curiosity and movement towards individuality will hamper the development of her ability to make judgements for herself, to assert her wishes and rights against those who would abuse her.

It is an axiomatic position for Christianity that all humans have been born sinful.²⁶ When the parents are Christians, this is explicit from birth, and the need to keep the child from acting on this tendency to commit sinful acts structures the child rearing and disciplinary techniques.²⁷ Individuation and autonomy are often construed of as 'sins', since individuation and autonomy

problems faced in the supervisory process with reference to authority issues.

²⁶Norman Powell Williams, The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study, (Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1929), F. R. Tennant, The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin (New York: Schocken Books, 1968/1903)). The apocalyptic thrust of Christianity means that the *raison d'être* of Christianity is to live a 'good' life and thereby get to heaven, the ultimate goal.

²⁷"In the preceding scriptural passages, God gave us the following guidelines for effective discipline: 1. Make a commitment to discipline your child. 2. Assume authority; take charge of your child. 3. Know your child. 4. Recognize the evil bent in your child. 5. Expect a high probability of success if you follow these guidelines." These guidelines include the advice that if you have to spank your child, you should use a wooden spoon so that the child will not become afraid of your hands. Sears, Christian Parenting, p. 274. See Philip Greven, Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

imply for these parents disobedience and lack of respect, and disobedience to authority figures is a sin to be punished.²⁸ If the parents of the child are Christian, then the child raised as a Christian has been raised correctly. It is in the best interests of the system that the parents be seen as having done their best for the child 'for her own good'. However inimical to the child's personal growth and autonomy, however vulnerable it may make her to sexual assault, obedience is paramount.

The profile of the incestuous father includes characteristics of authoritarian disciplinary techniques and of rigidity. The Christian, sexually abusive father has the traditional weight of his belief system behind him in his use of his right of authority over his family. That he uses that right in an abusive fashion may, if the daughter is lucky and the discovered abuse is punished, mean that he will lose his right to use that power. It will not remove the right to unchallenged authority from other Christian fathers.

Christianity and Suffering

When we cry, "Abba! father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him,

²⁸Steele and Pollack, "Psychiatric," p. 108, Greven, Spare the Child, Alice Miller, For Your Own Good: Hidden cruelty in child-rearing and the roots of violence, Translated by Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984(1980)).

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Romans 8:16b-18

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts...

Romans 5:3-5

One of the psychosocial impacts of incest is that a woman can become very self-destructive. There is often a history of self-mutilation, substance abuse and suicide attempts. These women are often involved in sado-masochistic relationships, whether heterosexual or homosexual. These women often feel detached from their bodies and have learned methods by which they can remove themselves from pain inflicted upon it. They are punishing themselves because they are suffering. They feel that they are bad, in every sense of the word. Part of the recovery process is to stop the cycle of self-abuse and to help these women understand that their suffering is related to their belief that they are the ones to blame for the sexual assaults perpetrated upon them when they were children.²⁹

In Christianity, which considers the body from the beginning as an evil entity, something to rise above, the way in which a child will attempt to deal with sexual assault in the body would in all likelihood be affected by a preset negative understanding of

²⁹E. Sue Blume, Secret Survivors: Uncovering Incest and Its Aftereffects in Women (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990).

the body. In many sexually abused children, acting out takes the form of self-mutilation. There is a growing view that many or most anorexics have also suffered from sexual assault. In the history of the female saints of Christianity, there are many instances of self-abuse and self-mutilation.³⁰ The writings by and about the holy women of the Roman Catholic tradition, in particular, indicate that the prevailing tendency was for them to abuse themselves and sacrifice their lives in order to better serve their god. The rejection of their families and the abuse from external sources were all interpreted as part of their testing and faithfulness to the ideals of their god. Furthermore, this self-abnegation was interpreted, analyzed and accepted as a sign of holiness by the Christian (Roman Catholic) church. These particular females were emulating - as they believed it, and it was accepted by the faithful - the suffering and crucifixion of Christ. As was the case of Maria Goretti, the interpretation placed on the behaviour after the fact, placed their lives within the mainstream of their Christianity.

Another aspect of suffering is the focus that feminist authors have brought to the debate. Marie Fortune argues that women misunderstand the notion of suffering. There is voluntary suffering and there is involuntary suffering. Neither is justified under any circumstances but "unlike voluntary suffering, involuntary suffering is not chosen and never serves a greater

³⁰Rudolph Bell, Holy Anorexia, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

good; it is inflicted by a person(s) upon another against their will and results only in pain and destruction. Sexual and domestic violence are forms of involuntary suffering."³¹ There are many daughters who believe that they are continuing in the sexual relationship to keep their fathers from leaving their mothers. They may also believe that they continue the relationship in order to keep their fathers away from other siblings. Does this make what they are going through a form of voluntary suffering? If they blame themselves for the sexual assault, do they see their actions are part of their redemption?³²

When a daughter is brought up with this sort of logic about pain and suffering, then it is perfectly plausible for her to view what is happening to her as part of some greater good even if she does not know what it is.³³ She may try to find a purpose for her suffering. If she searches Christian views about god, she may find what is considered a mature process theology or liberation theology type god and focus her god representation around this particular

³¹Marie Fortune, "The Transformation of Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Perspective" in Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds, Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), p. 142.

³²Redemptive suffering is another term used for voluntary suffering by some authors. See for example, Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), pp. 81-83.

³³Pope John Paul II, "The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering," Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, in Origins 13:37(February 23, 1984), pp. 609, 611-24, Richard J. Gilmartin, Suffering Issues of Emotional Living in an Age of Stress for Clergy and Religious (Whitinsville, Mass.: Affirmation Books, 1984). Michael S., Patton, "Suffering and Damage in Catholic Sexuality" Journal of Religion and Health 27(Summer, 1988) pp. 129-42.

theology. This god suffers with the world and therefore with her as she attempts to deal with the trauma of abuse.¹⁴ When the god allowed the suffering of his only son (who was, of course, himself in trinitarian thinking) on the cross, a chain of analysis began that focused on explaining suffering for the greater good which became embedded in Christianity. The Christian daughter who suffers may decide that her suffering is necessary to remove her guilt, and that it serves some unknown purpose, that like Maria Goretti's suffering, will bear fruit at some future date. Therefore, she would not even see the need to be relieved of her pain and suffering.

Christianity and Sin and Guilt

It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Romans 4:24b-25

But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned -

Romans 5:12-13

For James Masterson, guilt is a defence mechanism that emerges in the therapeutic situation as the final barrier against being

¹⁴John McDargh, Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging God (Washington: University Press of America, 1983), p. 131.

overwhelmed by a paralysing depression caused by feelings of abandonment.³⁵ Guilt is a defense mechanism created to defend against what he calls an abandonment depression and the fear of engulfment. As other defenses are penetrated, guilt about individuation surfaces to stop the depression.³⁶ This guilt, which began as an introjection of the mother's disapproval and withdrawal of support for the child's expression of self-assertion and wish to separate and individuate, now becomes the patient's attitude of self-blame towards herself. Reliving the relationship she had with her parents and reconstructing that relationship along less idealized lines is necessary for treatment to progress. This realignment involves understanding that the parents were not supportive, loving or kind and that what she feels guilty about was within her ability to control. In order to avoid the painful guilt feelings that arise when the person attempts to think for herself,

³⁵Masterson, Search.

³⁶Fairbairn argues that guilt arises as an additional defence against bad internalized objects. "Repression originates primarily as a defence against 'bad' internalized objects ... that guilt originates as an additional defence against situations involving bad internalized objects." The implication is that the greater the amount of guilt, the greater the number of bad internalized objects and/or the greater the power and strength of the bad internalized object. See W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, W., "Endopsychic Structure Considered in Terms of Object-Relationships (1944)" Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1966(1952)), pp. 93-4, and "The Repression and Return of Bad Objects (with special reference to the 'War Neuroses')(1943)" Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1966(1952)), pp. 63-65. See also Karla Clark, "Psychotherapy of the Borderline Personality Disorder" in James Masterson and Ralph Klein, eds, Psychotherapy of the Disorders of the Self: The Masterson Approach. (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Publishers, 1989), pp. 51-68. Emphasis added.

make autonomous decisions, i.e. to separate and individuate, (and thereby leaving behind her parents) the patient resorts to clinging and demanding, and sabotages her own autonomy in order to keep the only security she understands.³⁷ It was described by one woman during therapy in the following manner: "Growing up is like defying God. I feel guilty and frightened."³⁸

Inherent in the development of guilt as a defence is the notion of self-blame. Self-blame is a major cornerstone of the psychological problems of the incest victim. One of the reasons why a sexually abused daughter will blame herself is that she is attempting to keep order in her world. If she is to blame for whatever is wrong, i.e. why Daddy is doing this to her, then maybe she can change it - it can finally be made right and then Daddy will stop. On the other hand, if the blame belongs with the perpetrator, the person who loves 'me,' then the world is chaotic and there is no hope - no sense or meaning in the world. Alternately, by making sense of what has happened, the world is a bad place and people are all going to hurt her, giving rise to complete inability to trust. Since, as Fairbairn and Masterson would argue, guilt - seeing one's self as bad rather than viewing the world as bad and chaotic - maintains hope because this means that if she gets it right and does not do bad things anymore, then

³⁷James F. Masterson, The Treatment of the Borderline Adolescent: A Developmental Approach (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972), pp.60-1.

³⁸Masterson, Search , p. 61. See Gualtiere, "Therapist as Transitional Object."

the world will be orderly and good.³⁹

The doctrine of original sin lies at the core of the Christian belief system. It was created as part of the explanatory system surrounding the understanding of Jesus as god and Jesus' crucifixion as scapegoat or atonement for humanity's collective sin. However heuristically it was originally intended by Paul, for example, it became the cornerstone of the Christian belief system, with few dissenters, who were then labelled heretics. In essence the doctrine of original sin states that all human beings are born in a state of sin and/or evil and can only be brought out of this state through the grace of god in the belief in Jesus as saviour, and this is possible because god, i.e. Jesus, allowed himself to be crucified on a cross in order to atone for 'our' sins, so that the stain of the original sin of Adam and Eve, which was transmitted to their children *ad infinitum*, could be annulled.⁴⁰ This is certainly known as the 'hardline' Christian position as opposed to a more liberal interpretation of the atonement.⁴¹ However, it can easily be argued that the hardline interpretation is more congenial to the anthropomorphic structure of the Christian god. It is with

³⁹Fairbairn, "Return," Masterson, Search.

⁴⁰An interesting note on interpretation. In a song, well known in evangelical circles, and taught early to children, there is an addition to John 3:16. The lines read. "For God so loved the world, he gave his only son, to die on Calvary's tree, from sin to set me free.

⁴¹Swinburne, Richard, Responsibility and Atonement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 2-3. See James N. Poling, Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), pp. 168-73 and Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God so Loved the World?" in Brown and Bohn, Christianity, pp. 1-30.

such an anthropomorphic god (e.g. as the father god) that children are familiar and relate to in Christianity. This particular god construct is not that of theologians who often attempt to talk about god in non-anthropomorphic and hence more elusive terms but the use of anthropomorphic terms in order to describe the Christian god to children is by far the usual form of teaching Christian children about god.

Guilt, then, is a major building block of the Christian religious system, which has as its fundamental belief original sin and the cross as atonement for that corporate original sin.⁴² The result of this particular doctrine is that all human beings are guilty through association and are the cause of evil and sin in the world. Furthermore, the more 'all-good' god became, the more sinful human beings became since an 'all-good' god could not be responsible for evil or 'bad things.' This idea has itself been the focus of much dissension, discussion, modification and refinement during the centuries of Christendom, but it is incapable of total dismissal since the rationale behind the crucifixion would then be lost.⁴³ Without sin, specifically original sin, what then

⁴²For an historical look at the development of the doctrine of original sin, see Williams, The Ideas of the Fall, Tennant, The Sources. A more recent discussion which highlights its continuing impact occurs in Durwood Foster and Paul Mojzes, Society & Original Sin: Ecumenical Essays on the Impact of the Fall (New York: Paragon House, 1984).

⁴³One of the more recent and disturbing examples of the relationship between the atonement and theological rethinking is found in feminist writings on battered women. No longer are Christian women blamed for provoking their husbands, but they still have to be guilty of something. In counseling of battered women it is suggested that they seek forgiveness for their sin of silence.

becomes of the cross and the resurrection? Furthermore, children are not let in on the finer points of the meaning of sin and the atonement!

Christian thinking holds that guilt is an appropriate response to wrongdoing or sin.⁴⁴ Christianity offers escape from bad feelings by suggesting that the guilt that results from prior behaviours and from being born sinful can be destroyed by belief in Jesus and by becoming a member of the Christian community. One need only confess one's sin, be it to a priest, in front of the congregation, or to God, and all will be forgiven.⁴⁵ Therefore,

Based on the initial work of Valerie Saiving, it is not a position conducive to long-term positive change. V. Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., Womenspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 25-42. See Rita Lou Clarke, Pastoral Care of Battered Women (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), Gail Golding, ed., Hands to End Violence Against Women: A Resource for Theological Education (Toronto: Women's Inter-church Council of Canada, 1988).

⁴⁴Fairbairn sees this as a cornerstone of religion and is a way of dealing with the threat of a chaotic world. "Return," pp. 65-67.

⁴⁵Of course, this holds for the father also. A pamphlet from a Christian organization tells of a father, when confronted by a family friend, a medical doctor, about his sexual abuse of his daughter, is told that all he has to do is repent to Jesus and he will be forgiven. There is no mention of the fact that in Canada, at least, it is obligatory for the offense to be reported by the doctor to the proper authorities. When the distributors of the material were questioned they replied that "their primary concern is that the offender repent. ... they would report an abuser to authorities only if he failed to repent. Repentance is the only cure for the problem... the father apologized to the child in the (pamphlet). If the child is scarred it will heal." Jochen Kessel, "Abuse booklet's 'repent' theme angers groups" Ottawa Citizen (Jan. 19, 1991), p. B1. See Marie M. Fortune, "Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting: A False Dilemma?" The Christian Century (June 18-25, 1986), pp. 582-3.

Christianity supports this defence structure - guilt - by stating that the individual is born 'guilty'.⁴⁶ In this form of traditional Christianity, then, there is little emphasis on the notion of taking responsibility for mistakes, accepting the consequences, and moving on. To paraphrase Paul, sin made me do it.⁴⁷ Once someone has become a Christian, it is possible to avoid looking at the failure of the environment - mainly parental failure which has to be understood in order for the therapeutic work to be successful. The lack of support which, for example, a sexually assaulted daughter received as a child where there was a failure on the part of the family environment (the father who abused her, the mother who did not protect her, and the rest of the world who did not see or hear) to love and support her as an autonomous human being. She can now receive what she was missing during her childhood from the believing community. There is no need to face the failures of the past and the pain that it caused. She can thereby avoid the devastating and immobilizing rage, anger, depression, and helplessness of the painful process of reliving the

⁴⁶Or as Meissner argues, guilt is a function of the hyper-religiosity of religious mentality, whether in a positive sense of seeking grace or negative sense of accepting blame and guilt for sinful behaviour - even for behaviour for which 'I' am not responsible. To paraphrase, there is good guilt and there is bad guilt. W. W. Meissner, Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 215.

⁴⁷"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. ... Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me." Romans 7:15-20

past.

Guilt is self-blame and self-blame is a core feeling and experience for the daughters who are sexually assaulted by their fathers. If the child has been raised as a Christian, the guilt receives added reinforcement from the religious authority. The appropriate response for a Christian child when bad things happen is to search for sins they have committed. For example, see the Roman Catholic practice of confession from the point of view of many children. They must tell their deepest, darkest secrets and ask for forgiveness. Then everything will be all right. For the incest survivor/victim several things then become prohibitive. There is a problem with telling the truth about their lives. They can't tell because it proves they are truly sinful, perhaps beyond redemption, perhaps forever. If they have been told by their father not to tell, the sin of disobedience becomes a real fear. But if they cannot tell anyone, then they will not be able to ask for forgiveness. If they can't ask for forgiveness, then they cannot be forgiven or 'saved'. Thus, they live in a constant state of pervasive anxiety and fear, a fear that they are outside the love and care of their god - they are guilty and even unredeemable. These fears are real and stand in the way of recovery. To retain her god is to at least believe that there is order in the universe even if the daughter bears the brunt of the suffering caused by her guilt for not being good enough. There are rituals and ways that she has structured her world, but at least there is the possibility of an afterlife where the pain will be gone. To question the god

is to be stranded without moorings and to be truly alone. It takes a leap of faith - something the abused daughter is not very good at doing - to believe that there is something better ahead.

Christianity and Anger

Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.

James 1:19b-20

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Eph. 4:26 (cf. Ps. 37:8)

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:19-21 (cf. Deut. 32:35)

In cases of incest, the full anger and rage at being abused felt by the adult daughter is a difficult feeling to reach and accept by way of 'owning'. Often it is murderous rage, and this anger can be terrifying and all-encompassing to the survivor, yet it needs to be tapped. In order to eventually bring about a state of acceptance (if not forgiveness) about past events, the first step in the recovery process must be to allow the pent-up grief and associated anger at the perpetrator and anyone else the victim

knows failed to protect her.⁴⁸ However, to feel anger is also to begin to feel the enormity of the father's betrayal, the physical pain, the emotional anguish, the psychological manipulation that the daughter has kept locked inside of her for much of her life. Both as a child victim and as an adult survivor, she has spent much of her time and energy finding ways not to feel the pain.⁴⁹

A major component of the problem is that in cases of sexual abuse, the abuser is often someone whom the victim loves or has loved, or believes that she should love, thereby equating 'love' with abuse. The conflicting emotions can be resolved by allowing the anger to be released, but a release of the anger can lead to the desire to murder the abuser. One of the reasons that a victim may have a hard time releasing that anger is that at some unconscious level the victim 'understands' that the desire to murder the abuser is very real and concrete - not just a 'euphemism'. The 'I wish he were dead' is real and not figurative and just might be carried out under the right circumstances, e.g. when the full extent of the abuse is remembered and understood for what it was. In psychodynamic terms, the anger must go somewhere. In women, it most often gets turned inward on the self. Another solution is for her to displace onto all sorts of other people and

⁴⁸Karin C. Meiselman, Resolving the Trauma of Incest: Reintegration Therapy with Survivors (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1990), p. 161. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 122-32.

⁴⁹Blume, Secret Survivors, Chapter ten, "Avoiding Pain: Addictions and Compulsions," pp. 145-64.

things. The displacement can be onto bosses, work, husbands, lovers, friends, her therapist and, most unhappily, onto her children.

It is understood by many Christian writers that anger is a very difficult emotion for many Christians to express. It would appear that this also includes the ability to express any anger at God. In a society that suppresses the expression of anger at childhood abuse, females are even more repressed than males when it comes to anger.⁵⁰ Reaching, touching feelings and admitting that there is anger can be an almost insurmountable obstacle, even without the teachings of Christian forgiveness, because behind that anger and rage is pain.

Christians, it would appear, have a very difficult time expressing anger. They were noticeably uncomfortable expressing anger against or negative criticism of God in a study done with 534 Christian patients (79% of them fell into this category of being uncomfortable).⁵¹ The Christian daughter also loves her god. She has been taught and believes that god loves her, he even died on the cross for her (John 3:16-17). He watches over her, when he can't be there a guardian angel keeps watch (Matt. 18:10), he counts the hairs on her head (Matt. 10:30), he takes better care of

⁵⁰The role of the repression of anger at childhood abuse in the genesis of societal violence is one of the continuing themes of the work of Alice Miller. See For Your Own Good. It is also one of the major foci of James Masterson's innovative therapy with borderline and narcissistic disorders.

⁵¹W. Gualtiere "A biblical perspective in therapeutic treatment of client anger at God" Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 8:3(1989), pp. 38-46.

her than of the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28), the birds in the air (Matt. 6:26) and the fallen sparrow (Matt. 10:29,31). How do you get angry at someone who cares for you so much?

The law of talion says 'an eye for an eye.'⁵² The talionic impulse is the impulse for revenge and, along with anger and rage, is part of the defence system that can be put in place to deal with being abused. While revenge can be considered a reasonable reaction developing from the rage and anger at the perpetrator of the abuse, it can also cover up those feelings. The expression of that anger and the feeling of pain is necessary in order that the daughter can live a life in which she will not be afraid to feel. The daughter is helpless in the face of her father's sexual abuse and stores the pain. This results in a resolve (a) never to permit this passive acceptance of pain again and (b) to pay back the real and/or imagined⁵³ perpetrators of this and other pain when she gets big enough. Displacement of anger and revenge is a common method of trying to deal with the pain of past abuses. When the abuser is not available or too powerful to be attacked, others become substitutes and the feelings of anger and revenge are placed on them. Projections of the behaviour and motivations of the original perpetrators of pain are imposed onto all other persons. Others then share in the failure of the original parents to meet the

⁵²Harold Searles, (1956), "The Psychodynamics of Vengefulness," Collected Papers on Schizophrenia and Related Subjects, (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), pp. 177-91.

⁵³They are called imagined perpetrators in the sense that the daughter is unable to view people not involved in the abusive environment in a realistic manner.

child's needs. This leads to the impulse to overcome childhood trauma by replaying the past in the present in order to get the opposite result. The child victim as an adult can now mete out just punishment for the trauma and undo the past.⁵⁴ Alternately, if the guilt has not been dealt with, the person is trying to get it right this time by doing things differently. It is in the 'acting-out' that the lack of resolution of the talionic impulse can be seen to be having its impact. If the need for revenge, 'the talionic impulse,' is not mastered, the individual will continue to replay the past in an attempt to change the past. Thus aggression is turned on others and on herself. It is impulsive and without regard for consequences on future or long-term objectives. Thus the aggression (or the energy it represents) is unavailable for the use of the individual in organizing her life. It is locked into a never-ending cycle of anger and pain. In treatment, these impulses must be controlled in the service of growth. The need for revenge must be acknowledged by the daughter if she wishes to overcome those feelings and free up the energy wasted in the search for revenge (sometimes disguised as the search for justice). From anger to containment and then forgiveness, if the patient wants it. However, imbued in Christian teachings is the pronouncement that god will take care of the vengeance issue. Therefore to admit to feelings of revenge, or that one's behaviour is vengeful, would mean admitting that one is not really a good Christian. The

⁵⁴James Masterson, Narcissistic and Borderline Disorders (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1982), pp. 182-3.

impulse to vengeance can be seen as sinful.

The promises of a god who watches over a child constantly, protects her and takes a personal interest in her every step are enormous. When the daughter finally accepts that the responsibility for the abuse does not belong to her, but to her father, that her mother should have protected her but couldn't or wouldn't, then there is one final component to deal with - the betrayal of trust by god. Anger at god then becomes a necessary component of the recovery for a Christian abuse victim. The promises of a god who watches over one constantly and takes a personal interest in a child's every step are enormous. For some victims it may be easier to get angry at a human abuser, but when attempting to work out the true feeling about god, a block ensues.⁵⁵ On the other hand, it can happen that getting angry at god can work as a substitute for getting angry at the actual perpetrator of the abuse and work to stall therapy.⁵⁶ In this case, the daughter determines that the father whom she loved most of the time is only human after all. However, God, who is all powerful and in control of everything, is really to blame for it all. 'He' could have stopped it, but he chose not to, and this makes the betrayal of trust even more potent.

Christianity can be seen to offer a form of displacement for the need for revenge and the anger and rage it represents. Rather

⁵⁵Imbens-Fransen, Godsdienst.

⁵⁶Tess Tessier notes one case of this in her presentation at the American Academy of Religion's Annual Meeting in New Orleans, 1990.

than having to work through it, the abuse victim can be justified in placing those feelings on a shelf where it will be taken care of by God. A potentially valuable therapeutic tool is lost because someone else, i.e. god, will wreak revenge for the abused victim. While this may be very comforting, it can immediately block therapy. Working with the talionic impulse can eventually bring forth the anger and rage into the open where they can be worked with in order to discover the terrible pain of abandonment, the feelings of the daughter at never having had a safe place to live. In Christian therapy, however, anger and revenge can be denied and repressed as inappropriate. The sense that god will take care of punishing the abuser then makes - this makes god a god of vengeance and punishment - the very god so many therapists, pastoral counsellors and ministers want to deny is important and not 'the real God'. This is the very god they are telling victims does not want to punish them or is a distortion of what God really is. Yet this punishing god is often the one with whom the victims are most familiar, and now he is being called upon again.⁵⁷ Once more the daughter is being confronted with inconsistencies that give rise to dissonance. She is told that the god of love, the god who suffers with her, is the important God. At the same time, the Christian god of vengeance offers her an answer - if nothing else, at least the father will burn in hell.

⁵⁷Rizzuto, Birth, the case of Bernadette Fisher.

Christianity and Forgiveness

Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Col. 3:13b

But I say unto you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; Matthew 5:39

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven ... Luke 6:37

One should forgive one's enemies, but not before they are hanged. Heinrich Heine 1797-1856

One of the concerns of the daughter is often the question of forgiving the abuser, of making some form of peace with him. Part of the reason for this is the need to find some external validation that the victim was not responsible for the abuse that she/he suffered or validation that it really happened the way she remembers it. This is seldom forthcoming and puts the victims in the position of having to find within themselves that validation. However, forgiving the perpetrator is not a necessity for recovery from sexual assault or any other form of child abuse. These

fathers did not do the best that they could.⁵⁸ They are not entitled to forgiveness, it has to be earned. Even then, the daughter should not feel obliged to forgive what may be for her, unforgivable and unredeemable. If she wants to forgive, it must be for herself not for the father, the family or her therapist. The daughter has another option. She can simply let go, a feat that is difficult for the daughter. When all of her anger is vented, when she truly understands what happened to her, she can let go of the resentment, rather than let that resentment and anger control the rest of her life.⁵⁹ She has then become a survivor.

Forgiveness of one's enemies, of anyone who has harmed you, is one of the 'prime directives' of Christianity. It is not just encouraged but regarded as necessary that a Christian adult survivor of incest should eventually, not just come to terms with her experience of sexual assault, but also forgive her abuser. It is argued that without forgiveness the survivor will always remain 'unhealed'.⁶⁰ Christianity with its emphasis on loving one's neighbour and turning the other cheek, forgiving seventy times

⁵⁸See the works of Alice Miller for the argument that the necessity to forgive which is often put forward by therapists is still in the interests of the parents who abused.

⁵⁹E. Sue Blume, Secret Survivors, Bass and Davis, Courage, pp. 149-54, 365-66.

⁶⁰Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:32-35)

seven or forever, gives divine sanction and authority to the repression of that anger. It is axiomatic for Christianity that one is always striving to be like Christ, the 'imago dei' is placed as the epitome for which Christians should strive. Christians must emulate Jesus, who forgave those who crucified him even while he was suffering on the cross.

There is little material written on therapeutic spiritual intervention for the incest survivor in terms of Christianity. However, a fair amount of material for battered women in abusive domestic relationships is beginning to accumulate. With respect to battered wives, it is argued that forgiveness requires that the abusive husband undergo true *metanoia* or repentance. These men must turn their lives around and truly understand the evil which they have committed when they beat their wives. At the same time, however, women are told to look to their 'sin of silence' and pray for forgiveness from God.⁶¹ But if the daughter speaks up, she is often not believed. Chaos ensues, and often the family is broken apart. On the other hand, if she forgives her father, maybe everything will be all right.

Christianity, with its emphasis on forgiveness can give the daughter the idea that she must forgive her father even while he is abusing her. And even more distressing, she may feel that she must continue to let him keep abusing her. Letting go is a difficult option for the Christian daughter. Jesus forgave his murderers

⁶¹Saiving, "The Human Situation". Clarke, Pastoral Care, pp. 77-81.

even while he was on the cross, Maria Goretti forgave Alessandro while she was dying. All the daughter's training propels her to forgiving her father - to the detriment of her recovery. For forgiveness can be premature and impede recovery. To force forgiveness means that the daughter will have to stifle her anger at her father and her anger at god. To make the process that much more difficult, how would she go about forgiving the father god for his failure to protect her after he had promised?⁶²

Conclusion

This powerful god structure of Christianity can be a major hindrance to recovery from father-daughter incest, particularly if the relationship with the god representation has been the haven through which the survivor of incest has depended upon for survival and for a sense of meaning after the chaos imposed by the sexual assault. It is far easier in some ways to see and formulate therapeutic interventions in order to counteract the negative punishing god of Christianity than to counteract the loving, saving god who had created a system of meaning for her. That meaning includes the idea that guilt is normal, the belief that suffering has meaning, that anger is unacceptable, particularly anger at god, and that forgiveness is a necessity. However, the meaning that she created from these traditional doctrines in order to survive the

⁶²This may be one of the reasons why there is such a high defection among father-daughter incest victims from their religion of upbringing.

assault is counterproductive to the needs of the recovery process. When she was a child, she created a system of meaning from the teachings she believed were expected of her if she was to retain the love of her god, the father god of Christianity. At the most, that system of meaning may make it unnecessary for her to ever take control of her own life. At the least, it will make it difficult for her to take part in the recovery process to become a survivor of father-daughter sexual assault.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

If a way to the better there be,
It exacts a full look at the worst.

Thomas Hardy

This dissertation is a beginning step in understanding the complex issues involved in the therapy of the sexually assaulted child in a Christian environment. I hope that the dissertation will be considered a stepping stone for further discussions and research, that the conclusions will be tested and that this will result in change, change that will relieve the suffering of, and enrich the lives of, sexually assaulted children. The thesis has a number of conclusions and implications for the therapeutic community and for Christian theologians and their communities.

It is evident that I have aimed the contents of the thesis at two major communities, both of which have neglected the role of Christian religious values in the psychodynamics of child sexual assault. The first community is the therapeutic one, and the second is the Christian theological community. Whether it be the secular therapeutic community, i.e. social workers, psychologists and others who work outside any religious structure, or the pastoral therapeutic community, this community, as a whole, has tended to ignore or even dismiss the importance of religious factors in the painful recovery process from child sexual assault. In books for survivors from the secular community, such as The

Courage to Heal, there are vague references to 'spiritual concerns', but these are deemed best left to individuals to work out for themselves or with the help of some religious authority.¹ In works from the pastoral community, there has been little attempt to fully explore the implications of Christian beliefs on the survivors of childhood trauma. The religious therapeutic community has seemed to ignore the problem altogether, with a few exceptions. There is a tendency to assume that Christian beliefs offer a solution that will help sexual assault survivors without ever looking at the specific content of the survivors' beliefs and the role that the beliefs played in their silent acceptance of pain and suffering. Outside of the work of feminist writers such as Marie Fortune, Joanne Carlson Brown and Rita Nakashima Brock, to name only three, who are interested in pastoral care issues and violence against women and children, there is an unwillingness to push the implications of the existence of widespread child sexual assault within the Christian community to discover its theological roots.²

¹These religious authorities can be from the mainstream Christian denominations or often from 'alternative religious structures' - the new wave religious movements. Whatever the spirituality needs are, whatever the impact of the prior religious background is, it is often left up to the survivor to find some coping mechanism to deal with spiritual issues.

²For example, James Poling, the lone male in this field, has now focused his interests on other issues only secondarily associated with child sexual assault. While he feels that he has made the suggestion that pantheism is a viable alternate way of viewing god, it is not clear from his writings whether this is the case and how he views it in relation to the Christian trinitarian view of godhead, the crucifixion and the resurrection. While he correctly criticizes the Old Testament view of the deity, he also sees in it a model for helping the abusers stabilize their fragmented personalities by arguing that even god lost his temper

As far as theologians are concerned, there is a deafening silence, outside of the feminist theological community, to the implications of widespread child abuse, implicit and explicit violent child-rearing methods and child sexual assault in the creation of a violent society and a violent sexist religion. One can almost hear the voices crying, "But it's only a women's issue, after all." And it is true that the Christian theologians who are addressing issues concerning violence and families and the implications for the broader society are primarily women. This despite the fact that Christianity considers the family to be the cornerstone of its religious structure and the primary learning environment for imparting Christian values to children.

A crucial conclusion which affects the therapeutic community is that the Christian god is anthropomorphized primarily as a male, and he is considered to be in a close relationship with his believers. Therefore, he functions as a third parent for the believing child. As I pointed out in the introduction, the religious system of believers is part of their everyday functioning and interacts with all the other factors of their lives. This makes it difficult to keep the impact of religious factors isolated from the entire healing process. Thus, in order to keep the research area manageable, I chose to focus on the image of the father god in Christianity and the relationship of the sexually

and failed to maintain true love. He avoids, however, any discussion of how the Old Testament god can help the victims of the crime - the daughters - other than acknowledging that many of them have an almost impossible time retaining their belief in the Christian deity.

assaulted daughter to both her father and the father god. For the daughter, this god is known as father and is the ultimate source of what is right and wrong thinking and behaviour. The father god protects the daughter and knows what is best for her. He is also intimately related to the father in the Christian family and is the prototype for the father's behaviour. Since the father's behaviour and the god's behaviour are related to one another, the father god will also play an active role in the psychological trauma suffered by a daughter who is sexually assaulted by her father.

The daughters who are the focus of the thesis became believers by an act of 'fate'; that is, they happened to be born into a Christian home where traditional Christian values were taught. The religious beliefs focused on in relation to the therapy of survivors were the ones that had been identified by victims themselves. These particular Christian beliefs about forgiveness, suffering, guilt, anger and forgiveness, as well as beliefs about authority and sexuality, are major steps in the recovery process that endeavours to reorganize the self-image of a survivor of father-daughter incest. They are part of the belief structure that determines how Christian children should see themselves, their role within the family structure, their relationships to adults and god, and their place in the world. Because it was the father god, the traditional image for the Christian god, who had ordered these beliefs, it was with the father god that they had the most difficulty. For the sexually abused daughters, the guilt, the suffering and pain, the passivity and the self-abnegation were what

the father god expected.

Therefore, this powerful god structure of Christianity can be a major hindrance to recovery from father-daughter incest. If the relationship with the god representation has been the haven that the survivor of incest has depended upon for survival and for a sense of meaning after the chaos imposed by the sexual assault, she will have to leave behind the only security she has known, however self-damaging. If, on the other hand, she turned her back on the father god for not protecting her, she will still have to deal with her anger at the god who abandoned her, who deemed her unworthy of the protection she grew up believing she had a right to expect. When she was a child, she created a system of meaning from the teachings she believed were expected of her if she was to retain the love of her god, the father god of Christianity. At the most, that system of meaning may make it unnecessary for her to ever take control of, and responsibility for, her own life. At the least, it will make it difficult for her to take part in the recovery process to become a survivor of father-daughter sexual assault.

Therefore, an important implication arising from the content of the thesis is for therapists who counsel survivors of child sexual assault. They must not underestimate the impact of the Christian religious systems on their patients. If the relationship with the Christian god is not understood and dealt with in the therapeutic context, then unresolved issues will remain untapped to be released during a subsequent crisis. As I explained in chapter five, the use of object relations theory, which focuses on

transitional objects and the transitional sphere, was inadequate for understanding the relationship of the Christian god to human development, primarily because the authors who used it tended to assume this god was the creation of the patient and had little relationship to the societal construction of the god. I suggested that a better way to use object relations theories would be to view the god as a third parent, albeit a super-Father. Then all the insights from object relations theory about integration, repression, abandonment, introjection, projection and growth could be utilized in therapy to affect the outcome. The argument in the thesis makes a strong case that if a therapist has a patient who comes from a religious Christian background, the therapy is complicated by this third parent factor. Engaging in issues that relate to this third parent would not only help in the therapeutic situation, but would also be a virtual necessity. Furthermore, the same model could be used to engage other important Christian figures, that is, other important 'objects', in the therapeutic process. If, for example, Maria Goretti were an important figure for a daughter, the material about her discussed in the fourth chapter would be understood to have a bearing on how the daughter understood her abuse and how these beliefs are now a hindrance to recovery. She may have prayed to Saint Maria for the ability to forgive her father as Maria had forgiven Alessandro. She may have identified with Saint Maria as a suffering victim but not have been good enough to share in Maria's ability to say no. She may have found solace in the fact that Maria was praised for not telling her

mother, because she too could not tell her mother.

A major conclusion which affects the Christian community demonstrates that Christian doctrine and tradition do not clearly and unequivocally denounce father-daughter incest nor, by implication, the sexual assault of children. On the contrary, Christian views on sexuality, authority, suffering, guilt, anger and forgiveness, as well as its patriarchal structure, inhibit viewing sexual assault as a major problem. However, child sexual assault, particularly assaults committed by family members, was seen to be a serious one for the Christian community itself. Despite this fact, my review of the literature showed that concerns about the impact of a religious belief system on a victim of child sexual assault were almost nonexistent. There was a lack of interest in child abuse issues in the psychology of religion material, and only a little in the material from the field of pastoral psychology. Furthermore, religious issues were barely alluded to in the monographs and articles from psychology and sociology.

The biblical material is virtually silent on the problem of the sexual assault of children. There is no clear separate inhibition to father-daughter sexual relationships in the sexual codes. The passage which most obviously creates an inhibition to father-daughter incest has been open to interpretation, and historically the interpretation has been to view the relevant passage(Lev. 18:17) as referring to relationships other than the father-daughter relationship. Certainly, the ten commandments do

not forbid the physical, much less the sexual, assault of children. Furthermore, the story of Lot and his' daughters has never been interpreted to the detriment of Lot. Rather his behaviour is excused, and his daughters are either blamed for getting Lot drunk so they could take advantage of him or extolled for continuing the family's blood lines.

The traditional material further reinforces the "gaslighting"³ of the daughter. In the latter half of chapter four, I focused on the story of Maria Goretti as an example of a traditional Christian teaching tool for young Roman Catholic girls. However, the implications drawn from that story have a much broader application. That broader application also answers a question I posed in the introduction: "Is the Christian doctrine organized in such a way as to make children prime targets or 'high risk' for sexual abuse?" An analysis of the material in chapter four and the subsequent discussion in chapter six leads one to an affirmative conclusion. The reasons lie in the lessons learned from Christian child-rearing practices; lessons that were highlighted in the Maria Goretti story but which are just as applicable to other forms of Christianity. Children receive instructions on how to behave and on what is important in order to be good Christians. Through the biblical and traditional stories of Christianity and the belief structure created over almost two millennia, the Christian daughter will use her religious belief system to find an explanation for the assault. The daughter will believe that the rules that come from the father

³See p. 21 above.

god explain the way that she should behave - obedient, passive, guilty. Furthermore, these rules give her guidelines on how she should respond to the assault experience. The belief that guilt is normal, that suffering has meaning, that anger is unacceptable, particularly anger at god, and that forgiveness is a necessity are all embedded in the daughter's world view. However, as I demonstrated in chapter six, the meaning that the Christian daughter will create from these traditional doctrines in order to survive the assault is counterproductive to the recovery process. While she will appear to be functioning well within the belief system, her self-esteem will be slowly eroding from the inside. But more than that, these beliefs are already part of the meaning system of Christian children, even before they are assaulted. Since these children are supposed to be obedient to authority figures, for example, the beliefs can make a child highly vulnerable to being sexually assaulted. Paedophiles are noted for their ability to choose vulnerable children to assault. Children made vulnerable by a belief system that encourages their silence and passivity are placed at risk, particularly if the paedophile is a part of their religious community.

A major implication of the thesis is that Christianity, as a social and religious system, has outlived its usefulness. In light of the arguments in the thesis, Christianity can be seen to be an abusive religious and social system unamicable to personal growth. Instead of fostering the healing process among victims of sexual assault, I concluded that it actually impedes it. Through a

discussion of the recovery process from the trauma of father-daughter incest and a consideration of the basic Christian beliefs and principles regarding sin and guilt (personal responsibility), sexuality, authority issues, suffering and forgiveness, I showed that Christian teachings can actually create blocks to successful therapy. We now know that unresolved and repressed feelings not only have a detrimental effect on individual growth but also affect the quality and structure of a person's present and future relationships. The sins of the fathers truly do visit their children and their children's children.

This, then, has major implications for the Christian theological community. Based on the argument presented in the thesis, Christian theologians must enter into an extensive discussion about some of the religion's most basic premises about the relationship between humans and god. At the central core of Christianity is the crucifixion of Jesus, demanded by his father, God, in order to save the world. This image of 'divine child abuse' is not unique in the religious world. However, nowhere else has it become the central image around which all theology, worship and ritual depend. All the beliefs which have been identified as blocking recovery from father-daughter incest are structured in relation to the right of the father to sacrifice his son on a cross for the greater good. And it is against this father-god's demands and attitudes that the daughters, and ultimately all children and

the adults they become, have to defend.⁴

Theologians have failed to address child development issues and have underestimated the impact of Christian stories on the developing minds of children. These stories, even when stripped of their most virulent content, are still stories of violence. The stories of Ishmael's banishment, Cain and Abel, Abraham's intention to sacrifice Isaac, David and Goliath, Herod's murder of the infants, John the Baptist's death, the stoning of Stephen, the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the blinding of Paul are all violent stories at the behest of a greater good. Nowhere is that made clearer than in the passion narrative of Christianity. From the agony in Gethsemane to the betrayal by Peter, from the scourging of Jesus to the final crucifixion, the resurrection story of Jesus, the central glorifying image of Christianity, is imbued through and through with violence. These stories and many others are burned into the minds of Christian children forever. Supposedly, they are the stories about a loving god and how he cares for his children. What they are, in reality, are stories about a god who does not accept disobedience, requires that his children suffer, and punishes them when they fail. Furthermore, he is not above sacrificing one of them when he thinks it is necessary, whether it

⁴At a psychodynamic level, this problem has its own complicated structure for males who are sexually abused as children. For them, deity is embodied in maleness - like them. The complex matter of identification with the male abuser(God) and the abused(Jesus), either or both, has the potential to create very different problems than it does for sexually abused Christian females. The problems are further exacerbated by the incorrect identification of male paedophilia with homosexuality and Christianity's homophobia.

is his own son or an eleven-year-old girl. These are not abstract issues like questions of intentionality over which many a theologian has written many a page, but concrete issues concerning the lessons Christians are teaching their children about how life is to be lived. I was once asked, after delivering a paper at the American Academy of Religion on this topic, whether there would be anything left of Christianity if the 'virtues' I was discussing were dropped from the Christian theological agenda. My flippant response was, "Let's drop them and find out". My more serious response was that forty years from now we would have a group of people calling themselves Christians, but whose Christianity would bear little resemblance to what exists in the present. After finishing the research for this thesis and writing the dissertation, I now end with a more dire prediction. If Christianity does not reinvent itself, does not renounce the rationale for the necessity of the crucifixion, it will not only help to maintain child sexual assault as a continuing social problem, but it will also be a major factor in its continuing re-creation, and the cycle of abuse will not end.

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