

Dear Reader,

The topic of this issue is Sex, Part 2. (Part I is found in May 2016). A return to this topic is dictated by two current phenomena: the #Me Too movement among women and the clergy abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church. The two events are separate but they have some relation within the changing environment in the United States and many other countries. Both of these upheavals are not new and could be passing phenomena that leave things largely the same. But something seems different this time.

On the relation between women and men there have been continual changes over the past 50 years but the U.S has been conspicuously slow in electing a woman president. When a highly qualified woman ran against a totally unqualified man, the majority of men voted against the woman. That shocking outcome, however, may have unleashed a different kind of force than in the past. Starting on the very day after the presidential inauguration, women around the world let it be known that they were not backing off this time.

Marches do not of themselves bring about change but the energy unleashed at that moment has led to the downfall of some of the most powerful men in the country: in the film industry, television, the business world, religion and politics. Any men (most men?) who have misused sex have to be worrying that their turn might be next.

A crisis in the Roman Catholic Church began with the Boston Globe study in 2002. After a scurry of activity, things seem to quiet down. The Pennsylvania study arrived this year with a thud of horrifying details. Theodore McCarrick's sexual ventures were revealed and made worse by the cover up that went on for years among bishops, possibly including the pope. The right-wing group which has been attacking this pope since his installation has sought to use the scandal for their own purposes.

The pope was unusually silent when questioned about his complicity in protecting McCarrick. He made general comments condemning abuse and saying that the church has to do better. But he finally called a meeting for February of the leading bishops of the world. I hope it is not a meeting only of bishops; bishops talked for two years at the recent Synod and accomplished little. They need help from religious scholars, social reformers and activists who can shake them out of their ecclesiastical jargon that makes little sense to anyone outside the club. A plan for change is not something to be addressed to "the faithful" but to the whole world which is watching.

## A DESIGN FLAW

By Gabriel Moran

In my ninth decade of life on earth I have come to a conclusion: The human male has a design flaw in its sexuality. The response of many women to my discovery might be: What took you so long? I admit to being a slow learner but I think it takes a man in old age to get a clear perception of this problem. Some people would disagree with my conclusion because it may seem to excuse the bad behavior of men. But my conclusion does not eliminate the responsibility of individual men for bad sexual behavior. Some men – no one knows the percentage – manage to work around the flaw and lead morally responsible lives. But they have a nearly endless struggle with their mysterious bodies.

The problem is evident in the Bible's opening chapters. Many people seem to know only one creation story but there are two. One ancient theory of why there are two stories of creation is that God was dissatisfied with the first model and tried again. The second version was better but the human 2.0 still had a serious flaw on the male side, (The author professes to know a little about the human male, but almost nothing about the human female).

In the first story the "man" emerges from the evolution of the other creatures. Unlike the other animals, he was alone and lonely. He wanted a little contact with a being like himself. So God took a rib and fashioned him a mate. That was a bad idea because the man would never consider the wo-man ("with man") as an equal. The woman employed the qualities she had so as to get some control of the man, offering him a piece of fruit, an obvious metaphor for sex. The man liked the fruit but then was awakened to his own complexity and felt the strange emotion of shame. By that point, God was fed up with the human 1.0 version and told them to get out and fend for themselves.

The second story in Genesis has the man with a real partner (she deserved a better name than "woman"). They were put in a garden and told to take care of it. It was hard work but not without its pleasures. The ancient rabbis' favorite description of the first man and woman was "guardians of the garden." The Jews favored this story of human beginnings but the Christians latched on to the failed version.

them with a communal support in their lives as priests.

All of the Fathers of the Church wrote commentaries on the Book of Genesis but the one who had the most influence on the Western church was Augustine of Hippo. He can be called the founder of both Protestant and Roman Catholic theology. These days he is highly criticized for his sexual views. He linked sex to his concept of "original sin" which was a terrible name for something important that he was trying to get at. It should perhaps be called "original flaw." Garry Wills maintains that Augustine was far more concerned with denouncing greed than with condemning sexual sins. An obvious reason for Augustine's concern with sex was that he was the first man to write autobiographically. He had trouble understanding his sexual history, like every man.

Augustine is blamed for saying that the will is under the bondage of sin. He is not given credit for inventing the idea of the will itself. He recognized that a human has freedom of the will but that it is a severely limited freedom. Instead of choosing whatever he or she desires, a human can only negate all possibilities except one, thereby allowing the body to follow this one remaining inclination.

The flaw left in the 2.0 version of the human male is that it is ready for something sexual all the time but sexual activity is infrequently appropriate. For centuries the Catholic Church taught that sexual behavior was not only to be restricted to marriage but even within marriage it had to be directed toward conception. It seems safe to say that this never worked. No doubt some men repressed the sexual drive at great cost. It was an extraordinary man who could healthily direct all of his sexual energy into other outlets. Preaching this sexual code for all men was unrealistic, to put it mildly.

Why did western society generally agree with this Catholic code until the middle of the twentieth century? Because church and society feared what would happen if men's sexual desires, sexual imagination, and sexual behavior were unleashed? Women, children and every institution would be under threat. An unrealistic code of behavior could not survive the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the rejection of what is unrealistic does not automatically produce a realistic alternative.

Society, as embodied in religions and secular law, has decided that control of sexual behavior should be left to the individual man. Without institutional help an individual man is almost helpless to deal with the forces of his own body. Better sexual education that begins in infancy is indispensable. But when his body all but explodes in the teen age years the boy desperately needs to develop healthy controls and outlets. Instead, he is met by an avalanche of sexual imagery and few models of adult sexuality to guide him.

One surprising thing that the women's revolt of the last two years has shown is the pathetic sex lives of powerful men. These men are not out on wild sexual escapades. They seem driven by the need for a human contact (tactile, aural or visual), something they apparently can't find in straightforward human encounters. The term sexual harassment was coined a few decades ago and has been regularly criticized as too hazy in meaning for legal purposes. But the ambiguity of "harassment" was perhaps necessary to cover the range of weird things that so many men do to women, children and men who are under their control. Why would a forty-year old man who has a financially successful career risk everything by rubbing up against someone? Or weirder still, why would one of the most powerful men in the country demand that a woman watch him masturbate into a potted plant? Is that what the sexual revolution promised?

The scandal revealed about the Roman Catholic clergy exemplifies what can go wrong with partial revolutions. Catholic priests since the middle ages have been required to promise "celibacy" which explicitly excludes marriage but implicitly forbids all sexual activity. The "secular" priest was to be like a monk but without the protections and support of the monastic life of religious brothers. The chief characteristic of brotherhoods is community. The monk takes vows that usually include poverty, chastity and obedience,

all three of which are aspects of community life. As a life-long commitment it was meant for very few men although as a temporary discipline of life it could be a valuable experience for many people. The life was no more nor less than the word brother implies, a deep bond with men as equals but the exclusion of women. A saying in the early monasteries was that the monks should avoid two things: women and bishops. They were more successful at avoiding women. The bishops ordained monks to be priests, removing them from community.

The life of the secular priest was always very demanding. He had status and respect from the “laity.” When he became a pastor he seemingly had great power in his small kingdom. Although he was always in danger of going astray, the rigid system in which he operated exercised a tight control. It was not a practice for “father” to shed his collar and hang out at the local bar. Since they were men there were no doubt sexual failures but scandals were seemingly infrequent. The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s began a long overdue reform of the Catholic Church. But hardly had the Catholic Church opened up to the contemporary world when a reaction set in with the result that the clergy still had all the power but many of the restraints were missing. That happened at a time when a sexual revolution was underway in society. Not much was done to improve the training of the priests and to provide

The result was predictable although the horrific details of what some men have done were beyond imagining. It was now possible to have a secret life alongside public life as a man of God. The sexual inclinations that had been repressed now found a range of expression, some that were appalling. The priest still had power, especially over young people who were told that the priest was trustworthy. The Roman Catholic Church is not alone in having this problem but the promise of celibacy, an assumption of holiness, and a bureaucratic pyramid of authority gave the sex problem of Catholic clergy a distinctive and sometimes frightful aspect.

The solutions that are now spoken about, such as married priests and the ordination of women, would no doubt be an improvement. Obviously, there should be women priests. But to ordain women into the current system would only prop it up rather than fundamentally change it. The ultimate solution is to eliminate the clergy. Priesthood is not necessarily tied to a clerical class. The language of clergy/laity comes from a time when the clergy were educated and other church members were not. According to Christian belief, baptism is the main qualification for exercising priesthood. Pope Francis has said: “It would be opportune for all roles of service to have a time limit – there are no lifelong leaders in the church.” A priest could be ordained for a certain length of time, say 10 or 12 years, Some of these priestly members might be reappointed for another term.

This solution is not likely to be adopted anytime soon and the steps to do so are not evident. For now, Pope Francis has at least begun the process of modeling the pope as a brother bishop who does not have the trappings of a king. He will probably follow his predecessor in resigning when he has done what he can. Every bishop in the world could start doing the same thing, getting rid of episcopal trappings and deciding policies by conversations with the priests and other church members of the diocese. Having served as

episcopal leader for a while, a bishop could return to being a nonofficial church member. A new bishop could be chosen by the community from current priests.

## PENNSYLVANIA REPORT ON CLERGY SEX ABUSE

We're not sure this should even have to be said, but we'll say it anyway: this investigation is not an attack on the Catholic faith. Many of us, the grand jurors, are practicing Catholics. Many of the people we heard from, victims and witnesses, are Catholics. If anything we feel aligned with, not opposed to, the members of that faith. Child abuse, after all, is not just illegal; it is against the creeds of every major religion, including Catholicism. People of all faiths and of no faith want their children to be safe. But we were presented with a conspicuous concentration of child sex abuse cases that have come from the church. Because our investigation produced information from so many dioceses over so many decades, we think it's important to report on some of the changes we've seen - or at least the potential for change.

Before the Boston story broke in 2002 it seemed as if there were a script. Through the end of the 20th century, the dioceses developed consistent strategies for hiding child sex abuse. While the patterns were fairly apparent to us from the documents, we also had experts review them: special agents assigned to the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group: Behavioral Analysis Unit III - Crimes Against Children.

The agents identified factors that arose repeatedly in the diocesan response to child abuse complaints. First was the use of euphemisms: There was mischaracterization of assaults and misleading designations for the removal of a priest for a complaint of child sexual abuse. Violent criminal sexual acts, for example, were often described only as "inappropriate" contact or "boundary issues." The temporary or permanent removal of a priest from service was often coded as "sick leave" or "leave."

Investigations were conducted by untrained clergy or teachers, given authority to make credibility determinations about fellow clergy members. Untrained support personnel were used for victims' services. Church-run psychological facilities were used that regularly relied upon the "self-reports" of the offenders, who typically downplayed or denied their criminal conduct. There was a failure to provide contrary information supplied by victims. Absent a definitive diagnosis, child abusers were often simply returned to ministry. There was a failure to disclose criminal sexual conduct to parishioners - information that the community needed to protect children. Terms were used such as "retired" or "reassigned" that disarmed parents who might otherwise have looked for signs of abuse.

Abusive priests were provided with housing, transportation, benefits, and stipends - leaving abusers with the resources to locate, groom and assault more children. There was a regular, systemic, and institutionalized practice of reassigning a priest to a new location - rather than removing him from ministry - after complaints of child sexual abuse. Only bishops and certain high level diocesan administrators knew, and they held information within secret or confidential archives of the diocese. Not surprisingly, priests reassigned

to ministry often abused additional children. There was a refusal to make any report to law enforcement or else there were stripped-down reports. These minimal reports often lacked sufficient specificity to relay the gravity of the crime, the scope of the conduct, or relevant dates and locations. Even confessions or corroborating pieces of evidence were often withheld. We think of this constellation of factors as the "the circle of secrecy." We didn't come up with that phrase on our own, and neither did the FBI. We got it from Bishop Wuerl of Pittsburgh, now Cardinal of Washington D.C., in one of the documents we reviewed; these were his own words for the church's child sex abuse cover up.

Although the FBI could see how the dioceses were doing it, that doesn't mean we know how much they were doing it. The agents were clear that we will never really know how many abusers there were, and how many victims there were. It was hard enough for victims to come forward; but when they did, the complaints were often forgotten about, misplaced, shrugged off, or immediately discounted. The church's response not only depressed the number of "confirmed" complaints, but discouraged additional victims from reporting, knowing they might be rebuffed or ridiculed. As the bishop said, it was a circle.

The repeating pattern of the bishops' behavior left us with no doubt that, even decades ago, the church understood that the problem was prevalent. When they were finally subpoenaed, the dioceses produced over half a million pages of documents. The abuse was occurring not only by its own people, but on its own property. Children were raped in places of worship, in schools, and in diocesan owned vehicles, and were groomed through diocesan programs and retreats.

The bishops weren't just aware of what was going on; they were immersed in it. And they went to great lengths to keep it secret. The secrecy helped spread the disease. Secure as it was, though, we can't help thinking that the circle of secrecy could have been pierced sooner. As we've noted, there were numerous instances where law enforcement gave deference to the religious institution. Whatever the motives for that deference, it left children without their rightful civic watchdogs. It wasn't really until the press exposed the story, in Boston, that things began to change.

In a transition sixteen years ago, the media - not law enforcement - exposed a significant cover up of clergy sex abuse. While that exposure represents a fraction of what we've found in Pennsylvania, the effect of the investigative reporting of the Boston Globe on this issue can't be overstated. The newspaper's articles created a national scandal that altered the atmosphere. Something the dioceses had long attempted to avoid was now a daily occurrence – a public call for transparency.

In June 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops developed the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." The Charter established procedures calling on dioceses to take stronger action when crimes against children were reported. The Charter didn't require bishops to actually expel abusers, but it did for the first time acknowledge publicly that they should be kept away from children. Norm 6 of the Charter provided that bishops should remove priests from active ministry "when there is

sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred." Of course, it was still up to the bishop to decide whether there was "sufficient evidence."

HER, TOO

By Mollie Wilson O'Reilly

When I read the news about the sixteen-year-old murder victim who was beatified as a "martyr to purity," I had to check the date on the paper. Had I somehow picked up a sixty-year-old edition of *Catholic New York*? Alas, no. This girl, killed by a would-be rapist, was beatified on September 1, 2018, and it was Pope Francis who approved her classification as a martyr *in defensum castitatis*—in defense of her virginity. We are, it seems, still doing this.

Anna Kolesárová was a Slovak girl who was shot to death in her own home, in front of her family, by a soldier from the occupying Red Army in 1944. Her courage and her suffering are undeniable. She is the first Slovak layperson to be beatified. Her death at the hands of a Russian soldier makes her a symbol of the struggle against totalitarianism, and her cult represents a renewal of religion after Communism, especially among the young.

The trouble is not in her biography, but in the outdated and harmful ideas about sex and purity the church applies to her death. A recent report from the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life says that Anna "repeatedly rejected the young man's advances, preferring to die rather than give herself to him." A church that continues to talk this way about rape, murder, and chastity is a church that cannot credibly face its own crisis of sexual abuse or repair its damaged moral authority.

In August, the Slovak bishops conference circulated a pastoral letter that describes Anna as having been "fully aware, despite her young age" of the consequences of the soldier's advances, and praises her for having "followed the voice of conscience" without deliberation. The letter explains her story's relevance for modern youth: "Today, the temptations against purity are much greater than before—they weigh on the young soul from every direction, via the internet and media."

It does not seem possible that now, today, we should need to ask this question: Was Anna murdered because she heroically resisted "temptation"? Or was she murdered by a man who tried to rape her at gunpoint? It can't be both. Anna's death is both tragic and galvanizing. But, as B. D. McClay wrote about Maria Goretti in a recent essay, "The trouble is that she didn't choose to die. Someone chose to kill her." A church that badly needs to offer healing to survivors of sexual assault must stop suggesting that those victims would be better examples of holiness if they'd fought harder.

Maria and Anna are both classified as having died in defense of their "chastity," "purity," or "virginity"—translations vary. But those concepts are not interchangeable. For too long the church has been fixated on women's virginity as an end in itself, as if chastity were a possession a girl can lose for good, rather than a virtue to be cultivated. This view reduces women to objects that men can possess or spoil, and makes men—all men—a threat to be deflected. It is warped, toxic, and totally at odds with everything else the

church has taught me about love and relationships, and so, like many Catholic women, I've spent a lifetime shrugging it off. I've rolled my eyes at Augustine and Aquinas arguing about the Blessed Mother's hymen, and I cringed and said nothing to the homilist who kept referring to Mary's perpetual virginity at my sons' elementary school Mass. Even so, I cannot fathom how the church, in 2018, can talk about a murdered girl as if she were holier, by virtue of her death, than one who was raped and survived.

Can Anna Kolesárová inspire young people to embrace chastity, as Slovak bishops suggest? Young women know the difference between assault and seduction, even if their bishops do not. Anna was attacked by a violent stranger. It was not up to her, in that moment, to avoid the sin of sexual impurity. And if her story is told in a way that conflates the impulse to rape and murder with ordinary male desire, what meaning does it hold for young men?

The church, meanwhile, could learn a lot from victims of sexual violence—but only if we recognize that their stories tell us little about how women and men should think about sin and purity in the context of healthy, consensual sexual relationships. A church that badly needs to offer healing to survivors of sexual assault must stop suggesting that those victims would be better examples of holiness if they'd fought harder. Young people (and all people) need guidance to make moral choices about sex and love. But they won't get it from a church that's still telling girls they're better off dead than raped.

#### THE EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN (1837)

By Sarah Grimké

Had Adam tenderly reproved his wife, and endeavored to lead her to repentance instead of sharing in her guilt, I should be much more ready to accord to man that superiority which he claims; but as the facts stand disclosed by the sacred historian, it appears to me that to say the least, there was as much weakness exhibited by Adam as by Eve. They both fell from innocence, and consequently from happiness, but not from equality.

All history attests that man has subjected woman to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasures, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior.

I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy.

I know nothing of man's rights, or woman's rights; human rights are all that I recognise.

---

ALTERNATIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, INC.

235 East 13<sup>th</sup> St, apt 4D, New York, NY 10003, New York, NY 10003



Back copies of this newsletter are available at: [gabrielmoran.net](http://gabrielmoran.net)