

Father, into your hands...

On sexual abuse and sacrificial theology

A Letter from Benedict XVI

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Resumen

Padre, en tus manos... Sobre abuso sexual y teología sacrificial. Una carta de Benedicto XVI

El texto analiza el discurso clerical al interior de la Carta Pastoral del Santo Padre Benedicto XVI a los católicos de Irlanda. Sostiene que la violencia del abuso sexual acontece no por una transgresión o desobediencia de la teología pastoral, sino como una consecuencia de sus estructuras sacrificiales. Luego, se centra en el abuso sexual cometido por el clero como resulta de la violencia estructural. El autor asume que a través de este criterio de análisis es posible imaginar emprendimiento colectivos que promueven humanidad efectiva.

Abstract

This paper analyses the clerical discourse within the Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland. It claims that the violence of sexual abuse occurs not because of transgression or disobedience of pastoral theology but as a consequence of their sacrificial structures. Therefore, it focuses on the sexual abuse committed by the clergy as a result of structural violence. The author states that through this analysis it is possible to imagine collective entrepreneurship that promote effective human healing.



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KEY WORDS:

Analysis. Discourse. Clericalism. Sexual abuse. Structural Violence. Sacrifice. Theology.

1. INTRODUCTION: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT

*Dearest Father;
You asked me recently why
I maintain that I am afraid of you...*

Franz Kafka

[Letter to his Father].

We may be aware of the many cases of child sexual abuse by catholic priests. News, special reports, newspapers, movies, documentaries, etc. inform (almost daily) about cases or “scandals”, as they label it, involving priests in child sexual abuse. For example, I recall Amy Berg’s documentary: *Deliver us from evil* (2006). It shows the case of Father Oliver O’Grady, a catholic priest who was accused and condemned by the law of California of committing sexual abuse. The documental apprises how the Archbishop avoided solving (or even responding) to the claims of families or the charges against O’Grady. Instead, he relocated O’Grady to other parishes of the United States in the 1970’s, in order “to resolve” what he called an *inconvenient* or *improper* behavior. After seven years in prison, Father O’Grady returned to Ireland, his home country, where he resides and is financially supported by the Catholic Church.

I could point out many examples of this kind, where the Church’s participation in sexual abuse cases is “*uncovered*”. However, I will argue in this essay that this *repression* of truth “revealed” by the mass media does not help to understand the core of sexual abuse and sexual violence committed by the clergy. The mass media reproduces a conception where *theological-pastoral reflection*, *sexual abuse* and the *clerical hierarchy* are three separate dimensions. They establish a negative relationship between them: the clerical hierarchy because of its deep corruption ignores not only its theology and pastoral thought, but also the victim’s condition. I claim that in order to achieve a more integral comprehension of this kind of sexual abuse, it is important to analyze the structures of meaning that support both the theological narratives and the set of relationships within the clergy. Therefore, we must ask: Is it possible that sexual abuse finds support in Catholic theological-pastoral reflection? Is the hand of the offender supported by the religious structures of meaning?

We will demonstrate how this sexual violence is derived from positive relationships between three elements: pastoral theology, the offender-victim relation, and the clerical set of power. In order to achieve this objective I will propose an analysis of the *Pastoral Letter of the Holy Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland* (2010) [PLC here after]. We will use Foucault’s notion of *power* and Žižek’s political concept «*le point de captation*» [J. Lacan]

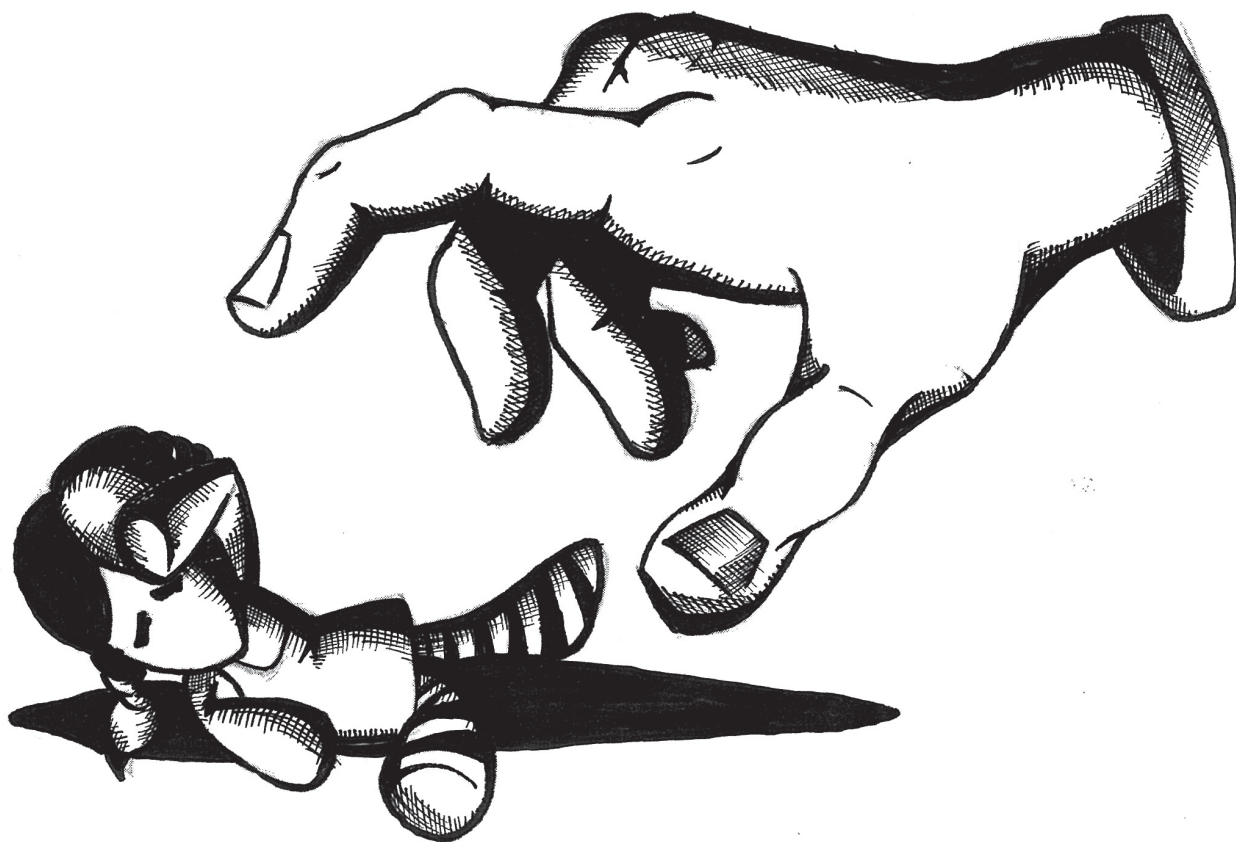
in order to read the *Letter’s* reflections on sexual abuse, victims and their families, *offenders*, *dogma*, and clericalism, as they are articulated through *Pope Benedict’s* discourse. We would like, by this analysis, to contribute to understanding a *problem* suffered by many people worldwide. We believe that a proper comprehension of *oppression* gives some liberating opportunities.

2. GREETINGS FROM A CARPENTER: WHY ARE WE «EVIL BLIND»?²

I have a letter in my hands; it warns me of a distance. Not only the *geographical* length between the emitter and the recipient. The writer had someone in mind when he carved the characters in the paper; someone besides me. I have found a letter, an *Open Letter*, written for somebody else: *the Catholics of Ireland*. Who are they? Accordingly to the Letter, this recipient is not a particular person. It does not refer to a singular human being or community in trouble or *challenged* by a specific social context. «Catholics of Ireland» is, first of all, an abstraction made by the emitter: the Irish of the Letter are nothing but elements of Benedict’s metaphysical speech. The *Father-Pope* has created an imaginary *people* of Ireland; he gave a shape to the land and its people. Not only is he a writer but a creative carpenter: the letter is dated the 20th of March «*on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph*», the holy *carpenter*. Benedict XVI [Joseph Ratzinger] is a *carpenter* himself who gives form to the *Catholics of Ireland* by exhorting them to remember: “I ask you to remember “the rock from which you were hewn” (*Is 51:1*)” (PLC, N.2).

The Father-Carpenter demands a memory of the hewing rock: the Catholic Church is, like in circumcision, the rock that gives cultural-form. Throughout the Letter the Church is the rock that *gave spirit*: “The ideals of holiness, charity and transcendent wisdom born of the Christian faith found expression in the building of churches and monasteries and the establishment of schools, libraries and hospitals, all of which helped to consolidate the spiritual identity of Europe” (PLC, N. 3). Therefore, the social and political formation of the people [*schools* and *libraries*], their health [*hospitals*] and also the *religious-moral* education was achieved by the *hand* of the Catholic Church. But not only in the public social life has the Church been present. It also has been present in the *intimacy* of their families: “In almost every family in Ireland, there has been someone – a son or a daughter, an aunt or an uncle – who has given his or her life to the Church” (PLC, N.3). Therefore, through multiple mechanisms, through the Letter’s argumentation the Catholic Church is the agency that defines or participates in the *symbolic structures* which supports *the Irish* world view.

The *Church-rock* provides *form*. Although, it is still shaping: the title speaks about *Pastoral Letter*. Not any Letter: it is *Pastoral*. The *Pope* has power over a *hewn* people; he



can provide them a cultural-form or even separate them from it. Therefore, we can locate this letter among the mechanisms called *the means of correct training* by Foucault (1995: 170-194). This *power* is interested in the ways of *re-introducing* the *bodies* of the convicted in the social structure that they have disobeyed. The pastoral *discipline* or *training* has a primary object: the *criminal* has to be rearranged and readjusted in the society-Church. It is a normalizing device that relocates the «abnormal», the «inconvenient» into the structure. The letter was written in order to solve the problems regarding this particular issue: how the *sexual offender* can be *relocated* in the Church? Nevertheless, its concern do not ends with the criminal: the *victim* and their families must be *reincorporated* as well into the Catholic Church. The people *carved* by the Church, both *offenders* and *victims*, must be re-introduced after *deviant conduct*.

Here emerges a question. If the Catholic Church is the rock that sculpts the Catholics of Ireland: Who [which institution] gave form to the hand of the offender? Wasn't it the hand of an Irish? Moreover: wasn't it the clergy's hand? Which rock hewed the abuser? There is an internal paradox; however the Pope is aware of it.

The *Letter* of Pope Benedict must avoid this possibility. That the *Church* has molded the *Irish* is the *Letter's* first argument; however, the *hand* of the abuser was not

hewed by it. That *hand* came from *outside*. The discourse of *Benedict XVI* solves the potential *contradiction* by establishing [again: by creating or shaping] an exterior. Žižek (1997) talks about *the neighbor's ugly voice*. This refers to the West's perpetual production of a *frontier* built to maintain the *ugliness* of *others* away from *us*. All Western symptoms have a common factor: *the outsider*, the *immigrant*, and the *ugly other*. Accordingly, the perverted-Other of the *Letter* does not come from a foreign *geographical* land, but from a global process called by Benedict XVI: *Modernity*.

Modernity is the *nation* of the perverted others. What is the *ugliness* about them? Is it how they look, smell, enjoy? Primarily it's thinking: "Significant too was the tendency during this period, also on the part of priests and religious, to adopt ways of thinking and assessing secular realities without sufficient reference to the Gospel" (PLC, N. 4). When the *Catholics of Ireland* entered into *Modernity* they adopted "ways of thinking" and participated in "assessing secular realities" without *reference* to the Gospel; in other words: they *cross* the established *epistemic* frontier.

I recall a similar case. Latin American Theologies of Liberation [TLL] were condemned by the Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger for similar reasons in his document *Liberatis nuntius*. This document claimed that TLL fell out of

the *Gospel* and the guidance of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Therefore, the *big sin* of TLL was the uncritical adoption of *communist* and *Marxist* structures of thinking and social analysis. Segundo (1985), like many others, shows that Ratzinger's argumentation was false for many reasons, for instance by not regarding the critical approach of the TLL to the *communist* and *Marxist* conceptions of religion and social analysis.

The evil came from the epistemic periphery of Modernity, which has no reference to the *Gospel* or the Magisterium. Seduced by non Catholic ideas the clergy was confused. Furthermore, Benedict XVI found a *deviant* epistemic condition of the Irish: "The program of renewal proposed by the Second Vatican Council was sometimes misinterpreted and indeed, in the light of the profound social changes that were taking place, it was far from easy to know how best to implement it" (PLC, N. 4). Again we have found an *epistemic condition*. Not one adopted from the *outside*, or from the other; rather an inherent inability to understand the Second Vatican Council.

Therefore, the Catholics of Ireland cross the epistemic frontier of the *Gospel* and Magisterium and then became *evil blind*: this seems to be Benedict's thesis. It is not the color of the skin, but the epistemic perversion.

Ergo, even if the Church has sculpted the *Catholics of Ireland* some members of the clergy fell into *epistemic periphery*. Some did not comprehend the Second Vatican Council. The carpenter-Pope has built an exterior, an "epistemic land" where evil comes from or, at least, an epistemic condition which makes them incapable of discerning good from evil. As a result, it came with a third weakness: "In particular, there was a well-intentioned but misguided tendency to avoid penal approaches to canonically irregular situations" (PLC, N. 4). Accordingly to Ratzinger, the Irish people were betrayed by a "well intentioned tendency": not accusing or opening legal procedures to catholic priests because of their clerical status.

Furthermore, they were unable to recognize *evil*. If we take a close look to the *Letter*, it is possible to appreciate how the Pope is not capable of *naming* the problem. When pointing out sexual aggression, the Pope only uses formulas like *irregular*, *improper*, *inconvenient* or *non-canonical* behavior. Benedict XVI avoids calling *the irregular* by its own name: *sexual abuse* or *sexual violence*. The name of the offender's aggression is obliterated from word and gaze. Not even the *Pastor* is able to *name* the sexual abuse. To expel it in *word* does not translate to an obliteration of ethical discernment. Nevertheless, the Pope transferred the *ethical* blindness to the Catholics of Ireland because of their epistemic condition of their good intentions.

Benedict XVI speaks about a deficiency in the Irish's gaze that makes it useless, not to identify the offender, but

to discern how to proceed with him. In *Liberation Theology* Hinkelammert (2010) speaks about *structural sin*. Alternatively to the sin as an act of transgression, it is a sin committed when you follow the Law. Hence, the structural sinner has no experience of guilt or regret because (s) he is acting according to the Law. Yet, Benedict XVI hasn't the *structural sin* in mind. On the contrary, he thinks that «evil blindness», as we have called it, comes from non observation of pastoral doctrine and misguidance from bishops. Owing to *disobedience* of Pastoral guidance of the Catholic Church, due to an *epistemic transgression* of *Gospel's* frontiers, they were unable to determine and act against the *offender*.

This deficient gaze, that assumes the sacerdotal investment as a place of *juridical* immunity, appears to be one of the principal reasons in the *Letter* for the *passivity* of the clergy on cases of sexual abuse. It is the fault of seminaries: "[...] inadequate procedures for determining the suitability of candidates for the priesthood and the religious life" (PLC, N. 4). Also the *seminary's* mechanism of observation and determination were not able to localize the right candidates. Therefore, the *offenders* came to the Church and became priests because they were aware of its legal immunity. Like the *wolf* in sheep's wool, the offenders find the Church as a proper place to commit their sins. The principal thesis of the *Letter* is that the *abuser* comes from the *outside* and takes advantage of the sacerdotal investment. His *hand* was not *hewn* by the Catholic Church, just *hidden* by it.

Through this *argumentation* Benedict XVI has transferred the responsibility to the *Irish* people. They were the ones seduced by non Christian *structures of thinking*. They were the ones that *misunderstood* the Second Vatican Council. Also, they were unable to *recognize* the *abuser* and even to protect him because of their *catholic-good-intention*. As a result, the Pope has *exonerated* the clerical institution: it was a problem of *certain* people, the Irish. The *victim*, now again, is guilty of its own sacrifice. We have found, however, the *Letter's* emptiness: it is not capable of naming the sexual violence. The writer *avoids* giving a name to the *offender's* sexual abuse: this omission must draw our attention. We are facing a *structural* or clerical condition that allows *sexual abuse* within the Pastorate.

Ann Cahill explains how for a theoretical tendency: "[...] rape was a violent instrument of power, situated firmly within a political structure that gave a disproportionate amount of power to men at the expense of women" (2007: 38). In the *Catholic* Church we found a clerical structure that gave *disproportionate* symbolic amount of power to the clergy at the expense of laity. It creates the *political* condition that promotes sexual abuse. Unfortunately, Benedict XVI would not allow this critic. Instead he focuses the problem on the Irish's epistemic transgression and gaze's deficiency: their *evil blindness*. We must

read backwards in order to locate the *core* of violence in the *theology* that supports the *Letter* to Ireland.

3. THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST: SACRIFICIAL THEOLOGY OR LET US INCRIMINATE THE VICTIMS!

The fifth paragraph of the *Letter* focuses on the principal *actors* of this play. His main concern is: *how can they all coexist in the Church?* Is it possible for the *victims* to embrace their *offenders*? Once the violence has been consummated, how can the sheep graze by the lion's side? Benedict XVI, our carpenter, develops in these chapter the theological structures of argumentation through which the abuser and victim are articulated within the Church.

In order to approach the Pope's argumentation it is useful appealing to Jaques Lacan's theory. Specifically, we have in mind Lacan's *lection* XXI of his seminar *The Psychosis*; particularly what he call *the quilting point* [*Le point de captation*] (Lacan 1993: 258-270). Here the French psychoanalyst reads Jean Racine's tragedy: *Athalie*. Thereafter, Lacan shows how the element «*The fear of God*» is a signifier (an empty one) that articulates and organizes all the mass of signifiers and actions that holds together the different characters of the tragedy and the tragedy itself. It is a fear that, retroactively, cancels by transforming in courage all the other fears. Even political fears are transformed or reverted into bravery through the magnanimous *Fear of God*.

Žižek (2002: 16-20) uses Lacan's *quilting point* to analyze sociopolitical phenomena. He explains how «*the Jew*» on Hitler's *Mein Kampf* works as a device that unifies, in a long term narrative, the economic crisis, the *loss* of values, and moral decadency, the frustration in politics, and the national humiliation of the Germans. Moreover, this not only *unifies* them in an imaginary level by showing it as a common origin, but *the Jew* articulates them in terms of social effort: «against the *Jew* we will work together». The quilting point in Hitler's discourse links the unfathomable enjoyment, stolen from the German people, with the Jew figure: «they have the pleasure that we are not allowed to, we must take it back». All political frustrations are, retroactively, transformed into nationalistic proud.

What is the *quilting point* in Benedict XVI's *Letter* to Ireland? How is it used to articulate victims, *offenders*, and family's experiences? What is the *stolen pleasure* behind it? The Pope makes a second *exhortation*: to hold tightly to the *wounds of Christ*. He claims: "I wish to exhort *all of you*, as God's people in Ireland, to reflect on the wounds inflicted on Christ's body, the sometimes painful remedies needed to bind and heal them, and the need for unity, charity and mutual support in the long-term process of restoration and ecclesial renewal." (PLC, N. 5). Now the

Pope does not ask, he *exhorts*. In a *long-term* narrative (*restoration*) all the *Catholics of Ireland* must reflect on «the wounds of Christ». As *the fear of God* retroactively cancels by transforming into courage all other fears, the «wounds of Christ» or «Christ's self sacrifice» transforms the painful experiences around the "deviant conduct" into healing and restoration, which makes possible a new encounter between victim and offender.

Another important issue to add to the discussion over the *Letter's* quilting point is the theological background. It is constituted by a *sacrificial theology* where, like Mel Gibson's *The passion of Christ*, the *deep* wounds of Christ's body represent the fundamental elements of God's salvation project. I recall Anselm's "Cur Deus homo?" where the Saint locates the sacrifice of the Christ in the very core of soteriology. Subsequently, the Pope's *quilting point* represent a *sacrifice* that articulates all the other *sacrifices* into a clerical project of the *Church's renewal*. Now the Church is no longer the hewing rock but, specifically, the «*secespita*»: the sacrificial knife.

Among others, René Girard has shown, through his *written work*, how the Christian religion instead of supporting a sacrificial theology denounces it. Unlike myths, where the sacrifice of guilty victims is necessary in order to reestablish a broken original order, Girard claims that Gospels see these victims as innocent: "Jesus is the unjustifiably sacrificed *lamb of God*" (2008: 1); therefore, Christianity shows not only the innocence of the sacrificed victim, moreover it condemns the social [mimetic] systems that produce victims as a self reproduction mechanism. However, Benedict XVI supports a totally different theology where Christ's sacrifice is necessary for human salvation. From this assumption he takes the *wounds of Christ*. Specifically, the Pope wants the *return* of every single actor [victims, offenders, clergy, families, particular catholics, etc.] to the Church; it seems to be the *Letter's* purpose.

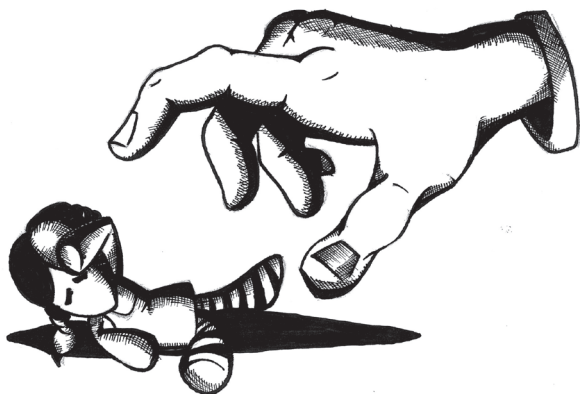
From this theological scenario, Benedict XVI advises the *victims*: "It is in the communion of the Church that we encounter the person of Jesus Christ, who was himself a victim of injustice and sin. Like you, he still bears the wounds of his own unjust suffering" (PLC, N. 5). Like Christ the abused children have open *wounds*; it is not sure, however, whether they are part of a *major* sacrifice-salvation plan or not. It leaves without answer these questions: *Was my suffering necessary like Christ's suffering?* *Was the sexual abuse that I suffered at the hand of a priest part of a clerical soteriology?* *Was it a self sacrifice?* By introducing sexual abuse into a sacrificial theology of a *single* victim, the Pope obliterates a comprehension of the *victim's* pain as the result of a social structure where they are confined into a vulnerable position.

The Pope speaks about *unjust* suffering without criticizing the structure that produces the injustice. On the

other hand, it is clear where *redemption* will be found: *in the communion of the Church*. Then Jesus's wounds transform suffering into *healing* because of his self sacrifice: "I believe deeply in the healing power of his self-sacrificing love – even in the darkest and most hopeless situations – to bring liberation and the promise of a new beginning." (PLC, N. 5). The *wounds of Christ* redeem by the nullification of all forms of sacrifice and suffering. However, this *re-articulation* of the *victim's* violent experience does not give real answers to her/his pain because it avoids discussing how that violence is the result of a clerical set of relationships. Through the logic of *quilting point* the victim's pain is introduced through sacrificial theology into a *salvation plan*, where it became a redeeming experience from a *particular* and *individual* experience.

The redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice also articulates the *family* experiences and the *young Catholics'* of Ireland experiences of the sexual abuse into the Church. As the mechanism used on *victims*, the *quilting point* reintroduces their confidence in Church: "[...] it is *in the Church* that you will find Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever (cf. *Heb 13:8*). He loves you and he has offered himself on the cross for you" (PLC, N. 5). Here *the wounds of Christ* [the cross] introduce a new element: the sacrifice is not in vain; it creates a debt which is paid through the attendance and faith in the Holy Church.

With the *clergy* we found a different approach. The Pope speaks about *betrayal*: how has the Church been betrayed through sexual abuse? "Together with the immense harm done to victims, great damage has been done to the Church and to the public perception of the priesthood and religious life." (PLC, N. 5) It seems that the central *concern* of the Letter is the *public perception*: the Church's image. It confirms how the *Pastoral Letter's* purpose is the Church itself: it is worry on how victims, their families, the offenders and other catholic people will coexist within Catholic Church.



Christ's wounds effectively reintroduce the *offender* into Church's life: "By offering prayers and penances for those you have wronged, you should seek to atone personally for your actions. Christ's redeeming sacrifice has the power to forgive even the gravest of sins, and to bring forth good from even the most terrible evil." (PLC, N. 5). Here we find the logic of quilting point (Christ's redeeming sacrifice) in its pure expression: it brings good out of evil. It transforms through narrative the painful and evil experience of sexual abuse into goodness. It remains me of *Faust's* Second Act where *Mephistopheles* claims himself as: "Part of that force, not understood, Which always will the Bad and always work the Good" (Goethe 1872: 48). The *wound* of Christ cancels retroactively bad by bringing *good* out of it.

However, the use of this logic of *quilting point* pretends to solve another condition: its deep concern is to show the *individual* dimension of the sexual abuse. Victims, families, offenders, and bishops: in the sexual abuse context all of them are individuals. We can see it clearly in the final considerations: "In confronting the present crisis, measures to deal justly with individual crimes are essential [...]" (PLC, N. 12). The Letter divides the structure into separate-individual elements: the *wounds of Christ* articulate them into a soteriological imaginary, but the *means of correct training* within the *Pastoral* text gives to every single element a specific task.

This mechanism of the Pope's narratives takes sexual abuse as a *traumatic point* outside of the structure: not even a *side effect* of their own pastoral-theological set of relationships. He avoids the analysis of both: the structural violence, where big amounts of power are concentrated in certain elements of the system, and its reverse: the production of points of extreme vulnerability within the structure. Moreover, Benedict reinforces the structure of unequal distribution of religious symbolic power: "In this Year of the Priest, I commend to you most particularly the figure of Saint John Mary Vianney who had such a rich understanding of the mystery of the priesthood. "The priest", he wrote, "holds the key to the treasures of heaven: it is he who opens the door: he is the steward of the good Lord; the administrator of his goods"" (PLC, N. 14). All powers, all *goods*, all the symbolic structure locates the *priest* as God's *administrator*: the one who decides, exhorts, and demands. The priest is the one with *power*.

All the logic of *quilting point* relocates the problem which makes it impossible to discern the real core of clerical violence: the *mystery* of the priesthood as the arrangement of forces within a set of clerical structures that produces points of vulnerability. Therefore, in the Pope's discourse the problem comes from the *periphery*, rather than from within its own pastoral and clerical system. It is even supported, blessed and legitimated through sacrificial theology. Therefore, to locate the basis of sexual

abuse the Pope should analyze the theological structures of meaning that support the clerical set of relationships within the Church.

4. CONCLUSION: THE FINAL CUTS

Althaus Reid (2006) has stated that *all theology is sexual theology*. The theology that emerges from the Pope's Letter is also a sexual theology: Is it lust? What is the *enjoyment* that we can feel in the Letter? It is enjoyment of power, domination, and control. It is this desire which defines the purpose of the Letter: to relocate all the Irish within the Church. Nevertheless, beyond that it is to preserve the idea of holiness of the structure in order to maintain the set of relationships as it is [and as it has always been].

The ugly perverted other [*the offender*] has stolen, or at least stained, the condition that allows the enjoyment of power: the clerical investment on the figure of the priest. The *quilting point* logic used in the argumentation pretends to show how every single actor in this play has an assigned role in the *soteriological* plan of God. It is a strategy of the discourse that places the responsibility on *individual* persons or *elements* in order to preserve intact the clerical structures of meaning and relationships. Nonetheless, it does imply paying a big price, and again the victims are the ones that assume all costs with their own suffering.

Only an analytical entry capable of discerning violence as a core which holds together the structure of clerical relationships, that leaves specially the lay children in deeply vulnerable condition, will provide a theoretical map to define proper measures to bring healing and promote more humanitarian communities.

However, when it comes to religious communities, we are confronted with special conditions. It does occur because, within clerical structures³, those who occupy a vulnerable position, or those who have no control on the distribution of symbolic religious capital, understand that their place in the structure is part of religious commitment or God's plan. Clerical oppression is deeply attached to the intimacy of faith-believe and to the people's understanding of world.

Therefore, in order to deal with violence within clerical structures it is necessary to understand the theological notions that support, for instance in Benedict's Letter through sacrificial theology, the set of relationships of submission. The approach to the Letter, or to some of its statements, has helped us to comprehend how clerical structures relate to or work with its own traumatic points. Furthermore, we have seen how this *traumatic* condition of clerical structures [the sexual abuse in our case] is not a *side effect* but a necessary consequence of their own

pastoral theology which concentrates power in some particular members.

NOTES

- 1 The author has a Masters degree on Theological Studies by the National University of Costa Rica. He works as a professor and researcher at the Ecumenical School of Sciences of Religion at the National University of Costa Rica. Personal email: soto1984@gmail.com.
- 2 Color blind [daltonism] designates a condition of the gaze that disables it to perceive differences between some colors. Consequently, «Evil blind» is a formula that we will use hereafter to illustrate a condition of the Irish people, accordingly to the Letter, which contains or disables their ethical discernment. Benedict XVI tries to demonstrate how this ethical condition is derived from a certain epistemic tendency adopted by the Irish that is not allowed by the Church.
- 3 By now we must understand that clerical power refers to a set of relationships articulated through religious symbolic structures of meaning, which concentrates power on the hierarchy that administers the religious capital. They distribute or keep the capital needed for the parishioners, for instance: salvation, forgiveness of sin, etc. Therefore, clerical power, beyond the Catholic connotation of the category, designates the violence produced because of the arrangement of relationships within different religious movements, not necessarily confessionally Catholic.

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