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Crisis, Change and 'the Continuous Art of Individual Interpretation and Negotiation': The Aftermath of Clerical Sexual Abuse in Newfoundland

ABSTRACT: At the core of this article is a significant but generally neglected incident, the clerical sexual abuse scandals that came to light in Newfoundland, Canada in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The focus of this piece is what happened *after* the abuse was uncovered, so often the untold story following the flurry of attention surrounding initial revelation. In order to understand this aftermath, the religio-cultural context of the abuse, reactions to the revelations and the many ways in which change occurred in their wake are examined through the lens of vernacular religion. This case study prompts reflection on what can be learned about the ways in which a range of people are forced to negotiate and interpret their relationship with institutional religion in times of crisis and change, and how a vernacular religious approach helps us to understand and contextualise this.

KEYWORDS: clerical sexual abuse; Catholic Church; Newfoundland; clericalism; folk religion; vernacular religion; lived religion; faith; practice

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Introduction

Numerous recent, well-publicised enquiries into historic sexual abuse of minors, and prosecutions relating to it, have raised awareness of the extent to which this has been a longstanding problem within a number of institutions, religious and secular. This article explores the context, impact and aftermath of historic cases of sexual abuse of minors perpetrated by religious authority figures in Newfoundland. In conducting this research, what I set out to investigate was not the impact of these events on the immediate victims, the abused, but to highlight both short-term and longer-lasting impacts of this on individuals and religion *per se*, on socio-political structures, cultural tradition, and even the built environment.[1] The case study of clerical sexual abuse in Newfoundland concentrates on issues confronting Catholics faced with shocking revelations about a trusted religious and cultural institution, and the actions taken both by the church and by the laity in response. It focusses particular attention on the claim that vernacular religion involves 'the continuous art of individual interpretation and negotiation of any number of influential sources' (Primiano 2012, 383-384).

In February 2016 the film Spotlight (Open Road Films; Director Tom McCarthy, 2015) won the Academy Award for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay. The film tells the story of the uncovering by the Spotlight team within *The Boston Globe* newspaper in 2001/2 of the trail of cover-ups within the Catholic Church there of long-term repeat offences of sexual abuse of children by priests in the diocese. As the film unfolds, it becomes clear that the cover up has been made possible in part through the complicity of a number of lay people in positions of power who have contrived to keep the matter secret from a variety of motives, with loyalty to the church figuring largely. The families of victims had been sworn to secrecy, again to protect the institution, on the assurance that their particular case was an isolated, unusual incident, and that the matter would be dealt with. They were generally unaware that the offending priest had simply been moved elsewhere to repeat-offend, and the secrecy

[1] I have a long-term interest in the Newfoundland story, as I was a graduate student on the island in the late 1970s, conducted further fieldwork there in the mid-1990s, and returned in the summer of 2012 to interview people and to advise on the making of a film for 'Religion, Sexual Abuse and Controversy: A Case Study' a unit within the Open University module, 'Why is Religion Controversial?' (Bowman 2013). This article is based upon that long term research, the Open University chapter and my Keynote Lecture for the BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group Conference, Religion in Crisis, 2014. I am grateful to the many people who have spoken with me both informally and in formal interviews over that period. For the most part, I have preserved the anonymity of my sources due to the sensitivity and deeply personal nature of some of this material.

ensured that the extent of the problem was not realised. A number of lawyers had vested interests in discreet, out of court settlements. Eventually, evidence is brought together and rumours corroborated which enables the Spotlight team to publish the story, encouraging great numbers of hitherto silent victims of abuse to contact the newspaper, vindicating the reporters' efforts and the editor's insistence not to publish without convincing proof linking the cover-up to the highest levels of the church.

I went to see Spotlight in Bath, England, in February 2016, largely out of professional interest. Having researched the scandals involving the physical and sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests and Christian Brothers in Newfoundland, it was a sadly familiar story. At the end of the film, after the action had ended, there appeared two full screens detailing the places in America where Catholic clerical sexual abuse had been uncovered also. A third screen listed the many places in other countries where similar cases had come to light. Some gasps accompanied the first screen, then the remaining details were viewed in silence by the majority of the audience in that cinema; it seemed to come as a shock to many.

The implication of the way the lists of places were presented was that these were cases that had emerged in the aftermath of the Boston investigation. Scanning the international list, I found what I was looking for: St John's, Canada. While *The Boston Globe* story was published in 2002, in fact news of the clerical sexual abuse scandals in St John's Newfoundland had broken in 1988/9. Events in Newfoundland are significant, because this was such an early example of disclosure of abuse and so much time has elapsed that we can examine the many ripples radiating from the central acts of abuse and cover up, often the untold or neglected long-term story after the flurry of attention surrounding initial revelation subsides.

As sociologist Anson Shupe points out, power inequity is frequently a feature of abuse, exploitation and manipulation, and 'the nature of trusted hierarchies systematically provides opportunities and rationales for such deviance' (Shupe 1995, 30). When the perpetrators of sexual abuse are figures of religious authority, alongside the individual trauma of the actual victims, there are even broader impacts and issues of betrayed trust, loss of faith and the questioning of religion itself which in turn can have far-reaching social ramifications. As I came to realise, the uncovering of clerical sexual scandals in Newfoundland triggered, in a number of respects, the unravelling of a significant segment of society in which religion was woven into virtually every aspect of political, educational and cultural life. The long-term effects on religion generally in Newfoundland, and on Catholicism in particular, were profound and are ongoing. They underline the need for nuanced study of individual and

structural renegotiation of religious identity and affiliation in the wake of such events.

Vernacular Religion

Any examination of the factors contributing to, and the aftermath of, the sexual abuse scandals in Newfoundland underlines the importance of a rounded understanding of the contexts and conduct of religion there. For this reason I frame this case study methodologically in terms of vernacular religion. Don Yoder succinctly described folk religion as 'the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion' (Yoder 1974, 14). Some years ago I suggested that to obtain a realistic view of religion, it should be viewed in terms of three interacting components: official religion (institutionally powerful, arbiter of what is accepted orthodoxy at any given time, although in fact this is subject to change), folk religion (drawing on Yoder, meaning that which is generally accepted and transmitted belief and practice, regardless of the institutional view) and individual religion (the combination of received tradition, folk and official/institutional, and personal interpretations of this 'package' in response to personal beliefs and insights gained from experience) (Bowman 1992, 2004). My point was to emphasise that different components interact to produce what, for each person, constitutes religion *per se*; these are not 'neat' or separate compartments. I objected to the implication on the part of some scholars that for individual practitioners folk religion was an easily recognisable category apart from (and inferior to) official/institutional religion, and that folk and individual religion resulted from people getting 'pure' religion wrong. As Primiano claims, 'religious belief takes as many forms in a tradition as there are individual believers' (1995, 51), and no one, including members of institutional hierarchies, 'lives an "officially" religious life in a pure unadulterated form' (Primiano 1995, 46).

A more holistic approach to the study of religion, focussing on what is variously referred to as folk, practical, practiced, popular, lived, or everyday religion is now well established (see, for example, Yoder 1974; Orsi 1996, 2005, 2012; Reader and Tanabe, 1998; Ammerman, 2007; McGuire, 2008; Kapalo 2012; Schielke and Debevec 2012; Bender 2012). As Morgan comments, the study of lived religion involves, among other things, 'focusing on popular practices, on the arts, on ritual performance in informal as well as formal settings, on all aspects of the materiality of belief – images, food, dress, the built environment, the soundscape, and the landscape' (Morgan 2012, 318).

Many scholars working at the interstices of folklore/ethnology and religious studies use the term vernacular religion to denote 'an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the religious lives of individuals with special attention to the process of religious belief, the verbal, behavioural, and material expressions of religious belief, and the ultimate object of religious belief' (Primiano 1995, 44; Bowman and Valk, 2012). Belief here is not understood simplistically as people's knowledge of and assent to doctrinal frameworks, but the worldviews and experiences that shape their discourse, their actions, their relationships with others (including other than/more than human beings) and their engagement with the material world (Bowman and Valk, 2012, 5-10). It is important to note that vernacular religion is not just another term for folk religion; it is not simply the 'dichotomous or dialectical partner of "institutional" religious forms' (Primiano 2012, 384). The emphasis of vernacular religion is on the need to study religion 'as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it' (Primiano 1995, 44). In other words, if we are talking about people 'doing' religion, all of these aspects must be presumed to be part of the package.

Vernacular religious theory, as its name implies, is context sensitive. While stories of abuse and cover up have emerged worldwide, to understand the particularities of the Newfoundland events, we need to understand the specific environmental, social, cultural, political, demographic, temporal, economic, technological and other factors involved in the perpetration of abuse, the cover ups, the eventual exposures of wrongdoing, and the broad-ranging consequences at social, institutional and individual levels.

Finally, a vernacular religion approach 'understands religion as the continuous art of individual interpretation and negotiation of any number of influential sources' (Primiano 2012, 383-384). These processes of interpretation and negotiation will be examined closely within the context of the case study. Newfoundland Catholics of all sorts, caught up in the aftermath of the revelations, were forced to review, (re)interpret and (re)negotiate their sources of authority and influence in profound ways, often repeatedly, and over a long period of time.

Institutional and Structural Contributors to Abuse

Although sexual abuse of minors has been shown to be a long-standing, global issue, a large body of literature has developed to explain some specific structural, institutional and psychological aspects of it in relation to the Catholic Church (see for example Rossetti 1990; Shupe 1995; Sipe 1995; Corby 2000; Plante 2004; Keenan 2012; Beaudoin 2012). Here I will

briefly highlight two important aspects from this literature relevant to the Newfoundland events, the institutionalisation of priests and clericalism.

In *Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church: Gender, Power, and Organizational Culture* (2012), Marie Keenan, a psychotherapist and social worker who has worked professionally with both victims of sexual abuse and Catholic priests and religious brothers who have sexually abused minors, observes that

> Roman Catholic clergy form a homogenous group, which is restricted to males who are similarly educated, subjected to one authority, professing one belief, vowing obedience to one supreme head, and professing perfect and perpetual celibacy. As moral leaders and official representatives of Jesus Christ, Catholic clergy hold particular power in the lives of the Catholic faithful (2012, 11).

Keenan compares traditional seminary education, where young adult males were trained for the priesthood, to sociologist Erving Goffman's description of a 'total institution': 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (Goffman 1961, 11, quoted in Keenan 2012, 50). In this enclosed, all-male context, Keenan argues, compliance, deference and unswerving loyalty to the institutional church were cultivated; on ordination, vows of obedience to superiors in the church hierarchy would be made, enshrining that loyalty. It has also been claimed that issues of sexuality, particularly at a time of life when these would have been confronted and discussed with peers in the outside world, were often inadequately explored, discussed or explained, other than in terms of sin, shame and denial. Catholic theologian Tom Beaudoin describes Roman Catholicism as an institution 'built on "homosocial" power' (2012, 236).

Perhaps, as historian Keith Thomas claims, it was 'inevitable that the priests, set apart from the rest of the community by their celibacy and ritual consecration, should have derived an extra cachet from their position as mediators between man and God' (1978, 35). The ordained and celibate status of the priest traditionally has set him apart from, and above, the laity, which in turn contributed to clericalism, the term used to describe both the power exerted by the clergy, and a policy of upholding/enhancing that power. As Inglis (1998), Doyle (2004) and others have pointed out, priests' unique ability to administer the sacraments, in a theological system where the sacraments are key to salvation, resulted in them being seen as close to God. In many traditional Catholic communities, to question, contradict or criticise the priest was almost inconceivable. Clericalism has been identified as a contributory

factor in the perpetuation of sexual abuse and the ability of individual priests and their superiors within the church to cover up such activity. According to Doyle, 'Clericalism helps us to understand why secular institutions such as law enforcement agencies, the press or the judiciary sometimes defer to the institutional church when dealing with sex abuse cases, protecting the image of the Church and its leaders at the expense of true justice for the victims' (2003, 212).

Context and Culture of Newfoundland Vernacular Catholicism

The island of Newfoundland lies off the east coast of Canada, in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The last province to join the Canadian Confederation in 1949, Newfoundland previously had been under British administration. With a harsh climate and an economy traditionally based on fishing and seasonal work such as hunting, sealing and lumbering, for much of the 20th century Newfoundland was relatively poor, particularly after a decline in stocks of fish led to what was known as the 'cod moratorium' (a suspension of the cod fishery to enable fish stocks to recover) in the 1970s. Only comparatively recently has prosperity come through the oil industry.

Beyond the capital city of St John's, much Newfoundland settlement historically was in 'outports', small coastal communities where the denominational and ethnic make-up frequently remained remarkably constant. When I was conducting fieldwork initially in Newfoundland in the late 1970s, for example, it was possible to designate certain villages as virtually 100 percent Roman Catholic of Irish ancestry, and others as almost 100 percent of English West Country descent. The connection between Irish and Newfoundland Catholicism had been strongly maintained, not least through a tradition of Irish priests serving in Newfoundland and some Newfoundlanders training for the priesthood in Ireland. In such places where there was a mixture of denominations, older Catholics frequently commented on a strong sense of denominational identity, reinforced both socially and educationally, which tended towards self-imposed sectarian segregation.

The integration of religion in traditional outport life was frequently alluded to by the people I was interviewing in predominantly Roman Catholic communities in the late 1970s. One Catholic man claimed that in his outport 'Your life was built around the Church'. Referring to the tradition that the church bell would be rung to call people to prayer at certain times of day, he said:

> Now, you'd be out in the fields or down gutting fish or something, and once the bell'd ring you'd stop and say the Angelus, see. And then at night, you know, the bell'd ring at nine o'clock and you'd

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> say the, what do you call it, the Profundus. You'd all pray, everyone would pray (Interview, 1978).

However, there was perhaps a certain amount of pressure towards religious conformity in a small community where people's business was not altogether their own, and some ambiguity in relation to people's practice of religion. It was interesting that after this man had insisted, 'You'd all pray, everyone would pray', he added, 'You mightn't believe it, but you'd pray it' (Interview, 1978).

As I have documented elsewhere (Bowman 2016), Catholic women in Newfoundland tended to take responsibility for the spiritual well-being and religious formation of the family, both initiating and participating in extra-liturgical religious activity in the home. Devotion to saints was particularly widespread (often reflected in statues of saints on home shrines and devotional pictures on the walls), with families commonly reciting the rosary together on a daily basis.

In Newfoundland, as elsewhere, cultural and material traditions expressed and embedded clericalism, and the priest was regarded as a figure of considerable importance. It was considered both a duty and an honour to serve as an altar boy, and a family gained status if a son became a priest. Particularly in small communities, clerical influence extended beyond the church into many other spheres. One woman I interviewed in the late 1970s had trained as a midwife at the insistence of her local priest; she said she would almost have laid her head on the block for him, adding 'I was that much scared of him, see'. This woman had been told by another cleric that whenever anyone did something for a priest (such as carrying his suitcase) they gained 300 days' indulgence. This sort of belief – perpetuated or at least tacitly supported by the clergy – served to strengthen the special status of the priest. Criticism of, or questioning, a priest's behaviour tended to be rare (although people were aware that alcoholism could be a problem for the clergy and this was often used as an excuse for erratic or irascible behaviour). When bishops visited outport churches on occasions such as First Communion or special days in the liturgical calendar, considerable preparations would be made to welcome and honour them, such as the vernacular Catholic tradition of building arches to mark their route. The tradition of kissing the bishop's ring, theoretically to honour the *office* of bishop rather than the person himself, likewise embodied deference to clergy. Morgan, for example, highlights the importance of 'the daily rhythms of activity that form children and adults in the sensuous life of a religion, shaping, colouring, and organising their relations with one another and with the divine' (2016, 317).

One significant feature of the Newfoundland education system was that schools were denominationally based, reflecting the religious make-up of the local population. A variety of denominational schools developed

in Newfoundland, including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal, United Church of Canada, Salvation Army and Presbyterian schools. In the late 1960s the Anglican, Salvation Army, Presbyterian and United Church school systems amalgamated to form a Consolidated Board, with the Pentecostals and Roman Catholics remaining the other major providers of education. In 1995, with 37 percent of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador Roman Catholic, the Catholic Denominational Committee was responsible for 166 schools.

Teaching in Catholic schools was frequently delivered by nuns, generally Presentation Sisters and Mercy Sisters (orders which had come over from Ireland in 1833 and 1842 respectively), and from 1875 by the Christian Brothers, originally an Irish lay order of religious men (not ordained priests) whose mission was to serve and educate the poor. Newfoundland women with a religious vocation frequently fulfilled this by becoming teaching nuns in one of the many convents around the island. The trio of Catholic church, Catholic school and convent was a common feature of the built environment in many outports, towns and cities. Priests tended to be highly influential figures in schools, not least because religious education (catechesis) and preparations for significant sacramental events such as First Communion were undertaken there. Children at Catholic schools were constantly made aware of the Catholic liturgical year and saints' days, as church services were part of school life. Because religious authority figures were involved to such a degree in education, there was what people referred to repeatedly as a 'culture of deference' within Catholic schools, with neither pupils nor lay teachers wishing to cross the priest or the school board. Although there was a provincially prescribed curriculum, it was possible for denominations to influence or censor this, by adding denominationally based religious education classes or rejecting certain books.[2] The diversity and proliferation of denominational schools was expensive for the provincial government, and maintaining quality standards across the different systems could be problematic.

As a significant denomination in Newfoundland society, the Catholic Church was influential at local and provincial level, and in a variety of contexts. Some hospitals were run by religious orders, such as St Clare's Mercy Hospital in St John's. The CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) in St John's was known jokingly by some as the Catholic Boys Club. There was awareness that there should be equal distribution of denominational affiliation in relation to public positions such as the Chief of the Fire Department or Chief of Police. Catholic interests (like those of other denominations) were thus represented in various social spheres.

[2] The secondary school science curriculum on reproduction in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, included some elements of sex education and teaching about contraception, but teaching on contraception was omitted in Catholic schools.

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Vatican II

In the 1970s, there was considerable turmoil in the aftermath of the theological and liturgical changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II. The liturgy was to be regarded as the centre of church life, aided by the use of the local language rather than Latin in Mass. There was to be greater lay involvement in the liturgy. A number of Newfoundland churches were rebuilt in the 1960s and 1970s to reflect the new stress on liturgy, which functioned to focus attention on the priest still further. Although they had been intended to facilitate greater lay participation, not everyone appreciated the liturgical and other changes. Undoubtedly this was a time of some 'individual interpretation and negotiation of ... influential sources' (Primiano 2012, 383-384). The devotions to saints previously so assiduously encouraged by the clergy and practised by the laity (particularly women), for example, were suddenly downplayed. One young man who described himself as a 'good radical Catholic' in 1978 commented on the difficulties facing the older generation of Catholics:

> In those days the saints were everything, you know, and the Blessed Virgin was everything and all that, and nowadays the saints are almost gone to nothing really ... I mean, gee, if you've gone through fifty ... years of your life with this being so pronounced, you know, and all of a sudden, in the span of five years, it's turned right around, then ... well, you can appreciate their confusion really' (Interview 1978).

Some 'reforming' priests rather insensitively removed much-loved statues and other items from churches, causing indignation: 'It's not a church any more, it's like an auditorium', one woman told me (Personal communication, 1978). Many women I interviewed in the 1970s were simply carrying on with their traditional devotions at home, while one man explained to me:

> See, since the new liturgical calendar ... there's been a lot of changes. St Christopher was erased. Everybody prays to him. They seemed to take him off the calendar. ... But actually, they were only taken off the liturgical calendar to make room for latter, later saints, you know' (Interview 1978).

The parish priest who commented on 'the changes that have taken place in the Church where many good, pious devotions were dropped or

neglected' (Interview 1979), devotions he himself had promoted, also had to adjust to and defend change in a notionally changeless church (Orsi notes similar renegotiations in *Thank You, St Jude* (1996)).

One aspect of Vatican II that was patchily enacted was the greater involvement of the laity in determining the life of the church at local level. Some priests at the time complained of lay reluctance to take on new roles and a deep-rooted deference to clerical authority; other clergy seem to have been content with the *status quo*. This issue of the church being the people, however, was to become an important part of the self-reflection occasioned by the sexual scandals that came to light in the 1980s.

Sexual Abuse: Revelations in the 1980s and 1990s

In the late 1980s and early 1990s two significant sets of stories emerged into the public domain, causing shock and outrage among Newfoundlanders generally, and despair and disillusion for many Catholics. These scandals related to allegations of sexual abuse of boys by clergy in a number of parishes on the island, and of sexual and physical abuse of boys in care at Mount Cashel, a home run in St John's by the Christian Brothers (who also provided teachers for a number of Catholic schools in the province). While there had been rumours and some investigation in the 1970s, these had come to nothing. In the 1980s there were renewed, vigorous investigations by both police and the media.

In 1988 James Hickey, the former parish priest in Ferryland (1986-8) and Portugal Cove (1979-86), pleaded guilty to twenty counts of sexual assault and gross indecency over a period of seventeen years, for which he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. In the same year another priest, James Corrigan, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment after pleading guilty to five charges of gross indecency and two charges of sexual assault against boys. Many other convictions were to follow.

These parish revelations and convictions were particularly shocking as the abuse had happened in the proximity of the boys' own homes, perpetrated by highly trusted and respected community figures who had been intimately involved in people's lives, hearing their confessions and supposedly providing moral and religious leadership. Hickey in particular had been a high-profile and popular figure. He had worked for CBC for several years before his ordination and was immensely well connected. He had had prominent public roles during the Newfoundland visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1983 and the Papal visit in 1984. There was widespread initial disbelief when allegations were made against him. Beyond the victims themselves and their families, innumerable Newfoundland Catholics experienced a sense of personal betrayal, the feeling that their faith, their identity as Catholics

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and significant religious and life events had been tainted because of their involvement with an abusive priest. As one person commented, 'They'd be queuing up to get Jim Hickey to marry them, now they cut him off their wedding photos' (Personal communication, 2012). These reactions were to be replicated as many more cases of abuse came to light, both in the short term and over the following decades.

In the face of allegations of abuse, at an early stage the church was given legal advice to proceed cautiously in relation to any admission of guilt or blame. It emerged that priests against whom allegations had been made were left in post or simply moved to another context, and that parents and victims of abuse had been asked not to make complaints public 'for the good of the church'. There was a crisis of trust, and numerous critical responses from church-related bodies calling for some sort of public inquiry. Eventually, the Archdiocesan Commission of Enquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Members of the Clergy (often referred to as the Winter Commission) was established. It started gathering evidence in 1989 and reported in 1990. This was not a judicial inquiry; it had no power to summon witnesses and it could not demand the production of documents. Nevertheless, the commission gained access to considerable quantities of archdiocesan papers, and it invited and received briefs from a great number and range of people. Although established under the auspices of the Archdiocese of St John's, it was conducted under the chairmanship of a former Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland, Gordon Winter (an Anglican), as it was necessary for it to be seen to be impartial. The Winter Commission was particularly concerned to investigate the factors that had contributed to the behaviour of church personnel, along with aspects of the culture of Newfoundland which had enabled this abusive behaviour to flourish in the midst of Catholic parishes.

The Winter Commission, aware that 'nothing effective had been done to meet the pain and anger that people were feeling' (Archdiocese 1990, viii), visited parishes and outports in which abuse had been uncovered. Naturally, passions could run high at such meetings. People were free to speak to the press outside the commission proceedings, but the commission ruled that although press and media would be welcome at the public meetings, cameras and tape recorders were not to be used during them, in order 'to respect the privacy of those who wanted or needed it' (Archdiocese 1990, ix).

One respect in which the commission meetings and proceedings were remarkable was the depth of self-awareness and reflexivity on the part of the many, very varied witnesses and the authors of the briefs submitted. While much outrage and anger were directed towards the church and its failure to act on information concerning abusive priests,

parents also reflected on their own naivety in their lack of questioning of priestly authority, and felt desperate that they had failed to protect their children. The depth and dangers of clericalism were realised and articulated. A Newfoundland woman is reported as claiming 'If a child was born without an arm, people said it was because the mother said something against a priest. That was nonsense, but a priest with that kind of shield could get away with anything. We are victims of our heritage' (Harris 1990, 19).

Catholic teachers expressed their frustrations with aspects of the curriculum and the lack of open discourse in Catholic schools. Nuns made strong submissions concerning power structures and gender roles within the church, and on the institutionalised lack of regard for laity, women and children. Priests spoke of the pressures they felt they were under socially, structurally and personally, and of the lack of support systems for them. It emerged that some priests had refused to send boys from their parishes to the youth 'jamborees' organised by Hickey and Corrigan, out of concern for the boys' wellbeing. Parish groups openly commented on the concentration of power in the hands of priests and church officials, and the concomitant lack of accountability. As one group put it, 'Our Church is experiencing difficulty in moving from the benevolent dictatorship, to which we were accustomed, into the shared responsibility we are attempting to implement. This difficulty is experienced by all of us, from the pew to the palace' (Winter, vol. 2, C132, quoted in Winter, Chapter 5, p. 110).

Overall, the commission's conclusions were damning with respect to the Catholic Church's behaviour:

> The Commission has determined that between 1975 and 1989 the Archdiocesan administration had heard rumours, reports or formal accusations of sexual misconduct between priests and children on many occasions. Nevertheless neither the current nor the previous Archdiocesan administration took decisive or effective steps to investigate further, to halt the abuse, or to inform parishioners of the risk to their children (Winter, Chapter 7, Conclusions and Recommendations, p. 138).

The report concluded with fifty-five recommendations on a broad range of issues, including how the church should be treating and helping victims of clerical sexual abuse, steps to be taken to ensure awareness of sexual abuse, education on issues surrounding it and proper responses to it; the treatment of convicted priests after their release from prison; the need for improved conditions for priests, including sabbaticals; and structural changes within the diocesan administration, with clearer lines of communication and greater accountability on the part of the archbishop.

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Archbishop Penney, who had established the Winter Commission, was forced to resign in light of its findings.

Mount Cashel

In addition to the Winter Commission, in response to increasing concerns about physical and sexual abuse of boys at Mount Cashel and the improper handling of past complaints, a Royal Commission under the Honourable Samuel Hughes QC (generally referred to as the Hughes Commission or Hughes Inquiry) was set up in June 1989 and produced its report in April 1991 (generally referred to as the Hughes Report). The Royal Commission uncovered the fact that a series of complaints of physical and sexual abuse which had been made in the 1970s about the treatment of boys at the Mount Cashel home had been inadequately investigated and followed up, and indeed that the Department of Justice had interfered with and curtailed the police investigation. The paperwork for subsequent complaints had not been acted on appropriately, or had simply 'disappeared'. The Hughes Report was damning in its condemnation of the complicity between the police authorities, the Christian Brothers and the Catholic Church in Newfoundland; of the failures of police, social workers and teachers who had had some knowledge of wrongdoing; and of the way the church had handled and reacted to the allegations, particularly in appearing to put the reputation of the church and the Christian Brothers ahead of the welfare of the children.

Significantly, the means of documenting adopted by the Royal Commission was quite unusual for its time:

> A significant saving of cost to the public was achieved by the Executive Secretary securing an arrangement with Avalon Cablevision Limited to provide tapes recording the proceedings both audibly and visually without charge to the commission in exchange for the right to broadcast at pleasure […] Because of these arrangements for the provision of the record and its wide dissemination, contemporaneously by day with review by night, the public was surfeited with information and press, radio and television journalists were provided with accommodation in the commission's premises from which they could monitor the proceedings without attending the actual hearings (Hughes 1991, ix).

Viewing the proceedings had a shocking, profound and deeply disturbing effect on many in Newfoundland and beyond. Journalist Judy Steed (who

wrote about Anglican clergy abuse of minors in Ontario) claims that the televised Hughes proceedings brought about 'a seismic shift in national consciousness':

> The trick, for the perpetrators, had been in keeping the victims quiet, maintaining their shame and thus their silence. For the first time in Canadian history, a group of adult victims of child sexual abuse were publicly identified as they told their story on television – real faces, real names, men in sweaters and trousers, leaning into the microphone, sobbing (1994, 18).

The story of the abuse, the cover-up and the Royal Commission was also strikingly portrayed through the two-part drama directed by John N. Smith, *The Boys of Saint Vincent* (National Film Board of Canada, 1992). Smith's fictionalised dramatization of the Mount Cashel affair was widely regarded as a valid and valuable means of representing the scandal. (When I visited St John's in the mid-1990s, I was repeatedly asked whether I had seen it, or was offered a copy of the video). Taken together, the commission broadcasts, media coverage and *The Boys of Saint Vincent* served to heighten awareness of the scandal, the cover-ups, and the church's behaviour. Mount Cashel as an institution was closed and the building was demolished in 1992, considered too painful a reminder of what had occurred there. In 1998 permission was given to build a supermarket and residential development on the site, which includes a small open area with a memorial to the children of Mount Cashel.

Both the Hughes and the Winter Commission reports are valuable tools for understanding how exploitative sexual misconduct can be particularly invidious in relation to religion. Both reports highlighted the institutional church's role and influence in society as a whole, and the need for change; the Winter Commission in particular raised cultural and theological issues in addition to commenting on the handling of abuse by the church. As subsequent scandals elsewhere have shown, many of the issues highlighted by both the Hughes and the Winter Commissions have broader ramifications that reach beyond the Newfoundland context. However, as they had occurred in Newfoundland, there was a tendency to regard these episodes as aberrations on a small island. The excellent reports remained largely unnoticed and unread outside the province.

Reactions, Responses and Renegotiations

The time came when there was a critical mass of journalists, other professionals and members of the public determined to bring to light serious misconduct that had been known about but covered up for many years. As it became clear that there had been media complicity in covering

up or playing down stories relating to sexual abuse by the Christian Brothers at Mount Cashel in the 1970s, for example, journalist Deanne Fleet and other media colleagues, regardless of denominational affiliation, felt 'on our watch, we're going to do it right. We're going to do our jobs professionally and thoroughly' (Interview, 2012). Fleet commented that whenever she broadcast a piece on this topic, more victims came forward.[3] The Winter Commission and the screening of the Hughes commission proceedings also led many people – such as the teacher of a physically assaulted Mount Cashel boy – to reflect on what they had known or seen, what they had done or had failed to do. After the Pandora's Box of secrets was opened, the *status quo ante* in Newfoundland could not be restored. People within the Catholic Church, and the population of Newfoundland as a whole, responded in different ways, from the personal to the institutional and societal.

Restructuring and Change

A Royal Commission was established in 1990 to examine the efficiency and operation of the Newfoundland school education system. Its 1992 report, *Our Children Our Future*, concluded that the churches' role should be considerably reduced. As Roger Grimes (ex-premier of Newfoundland and educational minister in the 1990s) pointed out in an interview, a number of broad issues around denominationally based schooling were involved, including value for money, falling school rolls and concern about standards. However, the scandals had led people to question the control which religious groups had previously enjoyed in education. The Catholic and Pentecostal Churches in particular vigorously challenged change, but dissatisfaction with the existing school system was firmly expressed in two linked referenda, which brought denominational education in Newfoundland schools to an end. A non-denominational school system was inaugurated in 1998/9. These referenda results showed that there had been an impact on non-Catholics as well as Catholics in relation to religion and education.

[3] A similar phenomenon occurred in Britain in 2012 when allegations of sexual abuse were made against the celebrity Jimmy Savile after his death.



Figure 1: The Roman Catholic Sacred Heart Church, an abandoned convent and the site of a demolished school, Placentia, Newfoundland, 2012. Copyright: Marion Bowman

The demise of state sponsored Catholic schools and the concomitant lack of intensive religious formation, religious services and preparation for major events such as First Communion held within school time, had an enormous influence on the Catholic Church, which is now having to rely heavily on parents and parishes for catechesis. All over Newfoundland, the familiar scene of a Catholic church, school and convent in close proximity became disrupted by the demolition or change in usage of schools and convents – many of the latter were no longer needed as teaching orders of nuns ceased to be part of the community. The imposing former Christian Brothers' establishment in St Johns became a spa. These are very physical, tangible reminders of change.

There has been increased religious pluralism in Newfoundland, with more New Age/pagan/non-aligned spiritual activity in the province (Bowman 2003). I found in New Age circles in the 1990s that the novel *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield (1994) was particularly popular. The plot of this book revolves around the Catholic Church covering up the truth of Jesus's teachings. That the church would withhold or cover up truth was part of Newfoundland's experience, and therefore had particular resonance. However, it is also noteworthy that continuing Catholics are experimenting with different aspects of spirituality and that the Presentation Sisters in St John's are active in this respect, hosting

workshops on 'alternative' healing and meditation on their premises, as well as encouraging environmental education.

Clergy and the Institutional Church

The effects on the Catholic Church as a Newfoundland institution were profound. In an interview, Archbishop Martin Currie stated that the rate of practice (that is, people regularly attending mass on Sunday) fell from an estimated 80 percent of Catholics in the 1970s to around 20 percent in 2012. Immediately after the parish clergy abuse scandals broke, individual priests were put under considerable pressure, and many had to review, (re)interpret and (re)negotiate their sources of authority and influence, underlining Primiano's point that institutional religion 'is itself conflicted and not monolithic' (Primiano 2012, 384). A number of priests left the church, for a variety of reasons. Individual anxiety and isolation were exacerbated by priests simply not knowing whom within the church they could trust, who had done what, who had known what. Some priests were subjected to abusive phone calls from irate members of the public. As representatives of the church, all priests were being blamed collectively for events, and encountered varying degrees of hostility. As the superintendent of the Roman Catholic School Board of St Johns commented, 'The Roman collar, once worn with pride, is now becoming a source of embarrassment and suspicion' (quoted in Archdiocese 1990, viii).

One priest recounted how he returned to Newfoundland after completing his training just at the point when news of the parish clergy scandals broke:

> And my classmates at the time said, 'You're not going back to that ... why don't you join a Diocese here in Ontario, why don't you get ordained here?' And a lot of friends of mine, here [Newfoundland] were saying, 'You're not going to come back and become a priest in the midst of all this?' ... They said 'You can't go back in that climate'. I said 'I've got to go back, I'm needed more than ever now. I've done nothing wrong myself and this is my family, you know, more than just my blood family, these people are my people. They need me now more than ever. If I ever had any thoughts of going somewhere else that's gone now. I've got to be at home'. So I came home and was ordained as a priest in May of 1988. And every evening on the news for weeks before and for months afterwards, there were pictures of arrested priests on the news shows, every night and on the front pages of the paper, and the talk shows on the radio were all abuzz with this.

Like others, this priest was in the front line as people of all kinds within the church tried to come to terms with what had happened, and representatives of the church had to find ways to engage with people under totally new circumstances:

> The first couple of years I was ordained, we were having all sorts of public meetings in churches and in parish halls, school gymnasiums, wherever we could gather large groups of people to talk about what was going on and how people felt about it, how we could respond to it. It was new to us and we were stumbling all over the place making mistakes galore (Interview, 2012).

An acquaintance asked, in relation to one such meeting, 'How can you listen to everything they're saying about you?'; another priest with him at the time answered 'Because we're the priests. We're the targets right now, we represent what they're angry about'. Nevertheless, the personal as well as the institutional did surface for this priest, one of whose friends had been sexually assaulted.

> And I did have one woman, at one point who jumped up in the middle of one of these meetings ... and screamed and said, 'How could you allow this to go on? Why didn't you do something? Why didn't you do something to stop this, this evil? Our children were being raped! You allowed them! Why didn't you do something?' I said, 'Because I was the same age as they were! What were you doing? What were you doing while my friends were being raped?' She said, 'Well, you know what I mean, what was the Church doing?' I said, 'You are the Church, I look to you, you are of the Church as well. I don't care about that fellow from Rome, I didn't expect him to do anything. I haven't much faith in him, I have faith in you people (Interview, 2012).

It is striking that, in the midst of a volatile public meeting, the young priest invoked the Vatican II phraseology of the 'people being the church', not simply to point out that they had to work together to remake the church in future, but also, it seems, as a way of indicating that the people shared some of the responsibility for what had happened in the past. Neither 'the Church' nor 'the people' were monocultural, coherent entities; individuals with different stories and experiences were dealing with how to come to terms with what had happened and how to move on.

A phrase repeatedly used by Newfoundlanders we interviewed while filming in 2012 in relation to the scandals was the 'death of deference'. The clericalism of the past was challenged and largely abandoned; priests are watched and their actions questioned in ways that would have been unthinkable previously. One high-ranking cleric commented, 'They used to put up arches for us, now they might throw

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rocks at us' (Personal communication, 2012). The Catholic Church knows that it still has a huge job to do in terms of regaining trust and credibility, and references to the scandals are still part of public and church discourse. The publication *On Good Soil: Pastoral Planning for Evangelisation and Catechesis with Adults* produced by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in 2012 contains the following declaration:

> We name, acknowledge and express contrition for the history of sexual abuse of children by some members of the Church. It is unconscionable that any vulnerable person should be harmed by anyone who claims to follow in the way of the One who said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs'. (Luke 18:16) How can people trust after trust has been so violated? Humbly, the Church asks that we walk together towards a future where abuse is ended, where trust is earned, and where love is found (CCCB 2012, 34).

People involved in institutional religion have had to negotiate a number of different and difficult relationships – with fellow clerics, with parishioners, with the non-Catholic public, with lawyers, with abuse victims and with those in authority over them. This is the case even for Archbishop Currie, who remarked 'As a Bishop in the Church you're sort of caught between the laity and the priests and the Vatican' (Interview, 2012). An additional problem in relation to public perception is that the Church still has a duty of care towards abusive priests following their release from prison.

The Archdiocese of St John's has sponsored research by Memorial University of Newfoundland into sexual abuse, and the vetting of candidates for the priesthood is considerably more rigorous than before. There is an increase in the number of mature candidates coming forward and being accepted for ordination, though the overall number of candidates for ordination in Newfoundland has declined, and there is no longer a ready supply of Irish priests. Some Newfoundland parishes now are receiving priests from areas where they had no traditional links, such as Poland and the Indian sub-continent.

The Church's biggest problems in Newfoundland – as elsewhere in Canada and beyond – are how to re-engage with Catholics who have left the church and how to attract younger people who have not been involved in the church and who have missed out on Catholic instruction in schools. *On Good Soil* identifies four generations of adults in Canada whose needs must be addressed: mature adults (born before 1945); baby boomers (born between 1945 and 1964); Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979); and the Millennial Generation (born after 1979). The church is actively

exploring the use of media and social networking tools as a means of engaging with and attracting younger people.

The institutional church is still brokering a new relationship with the laity who have remained within the church, and now emphasises that the Church and the priesthood are the servants of the people. As Archbishop Currie put it, 'We need to bring the laity into partnerships with us in trying to build a new Church. We can't just say "Father knows best"' (Interview, July 2012). As the priest quoted earlier told me,

> Fortunately for me, I find the people have been so, so kind to me, and so eager to rebuild a sense of community and a sense of a faith community. And they're anxious to rebuild and build up the institution as well. Not the institution that existed but a newer and a better one. Any move that is being done by the Church that they see as a positive force for change, they're behind, they're excited about. But unfortunately the Roman Catholic Church as a global institution is so huge and so slow moving it's glacial. And people are no longer patient enough to wait for that change because they see most everything else in the world moving at such a rapid pace (Interview, 2012).

Laypeople

The ripples of the child abuse scandals spread far beyond the victims themselves. There was, unsurprisingly, a backlash against the Catholic Church on the part of many islanders, reflected in the sharp declines in church attendance alluded to. The scandals undoubtedly led many to reject the institutional Church and its authority over their lives and those of their children. However, as Orsi points out, 'The religious person who enters a particular life moment or crisis does not come to it free of all memory, relationships, embodiments, desires, fears and inheritances ... Religion situates practitioners in webs of relationships between heaven and earth, living and dead, and in rounds of stories' (Orsi 2012, 152).

Many practising Catholics were forced into complex (re)interpretations and (re)negotiations of individual relationships with priests, with the Catholic Church and with religion itself. Newfoundland Catholics were traumatised and confused that something so dreadful could happen in the institution that had played such a major role in their lives and in which they had invested their identity, faith and hope. When I visited Newfoundland in the mid-1990s, one Catholic described herself and other Newfoundlanders not as 'lapsed Catholics' but as 'collapsed Catholics', while another woman I spoke with at that time said, 'I can only go to an empty church now, I can't go when there are priests there'. The

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religious lives of people with no direct experience of abuse were nevertheless disrupted and ruptured by the revelations.

For those who remained actively within the church, there were some extremely significant shifts in devotional patterns, attitudes and activities. The prediction in the Archdiocesan enquiry that 'the familiar parish structure of past generations is no longer possible, and that increased lay involvement will be necessary if the institutional Church is going to survive' (Archdiocese 1990, 155) proved accurate. The decrease in the involvement of altar boys in public worship, for example, led to increased participation by other laypeople – most noticeably by women, who began to take on high-profile activities within church services and other pastoral roles. Many have seen this as a very positive development; as one older woman said, 'In my day the only time a woman got near the altar was on her wedding day' (Interview, 1996). Calls have been made not just for increased participation by women, but for women to have more authoritative – indeed ordained – positions within the church. Clerical celibacy is openly questioned and the desirability of married clergy is advocated by many laity.

Many Catholics readdressed the Vatican II idea of the church being the people, and that emerged as a strong and empowering trope among a number of people I spoke with in both 1996 and 2012. One woman, who had felt utterly betrayed by and estranged from the church in the wake of the sexual abuse revelations, felt increasingly that she was missing the spiritual life that had been so much part of her upbringing. She recounted that she suddenly realised, 'I am the church, not these abusive men, I am the church, the people are the church' and became active within the church again (Personal communication, 2012).

The complexity and longevity of 'the continuous art of individual interpretation and negotiation of any number of influential sources' (Primiano 2012, 283) was clearly demonstrated by an interview in 2012 with one woman who had decided to stay in the church after the scandals, despite being shocked by the revelations. She had embraced changes in the church that gave laypeople significant public and pastoral roles, which she clearly found immensely fulfilling. However, in 2010 correspondence from 1993 was uncovered and reported in Canadian media relating to Bernard Prince, convicted in 2008 of molesting thirteen boys in Ontario between 1964 and 1984. This correspondence showed that at a time when protocols were already theoretically in place within the church for dealing with any accusations of abuse, they had been ignored. She concluded that, judging by the standards she would have applied to a secular institution, the church had failed, so she felt she could continue no longer to be part of it. She ceased to be part of a community that was dear to her; she no longer carried out roles that she valued and enjoyed within the church;

she no longer has a shared religious life with her husband; she no longer has a communal spiritual life. Having weathered the storm of the revelations in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in the end she felt compelled on principle to leave the church in 2010. For this Newfoundland woman, the negotiation and renegotiation of her relationship with institutional religion had been deep and painful. This is the reality behind the statistics of people leaving the church in the wake of the scandals: it is not necessarily a simple matter; it can have significant personal consequences; it can occur over a long period of time.

Many laypeople and clergy are working enthusiastically, creatively and optimistically on new relationships and new forms of Church with continuing and lapsed/'collapsed' Catholics in the post-clericalist context, and with the 'lost generation' of Newfoundlanders who have not had Catholic formation within the school system. Newfoundland Catholics have adopted various strategies as they renegotiate their religious, spiritual, post-religious and non-religious identities and praxis, within and beyond the institutional church.

Being Catholic

Despite all that has happened, the most pertinent question may not be 'Are Newfoundlanders still Catholic?', but 'How are Newfoundlanders Catholic?' This is a question clearly relevant not only for Newfoundlanders. Despite the exposure of physical and sexual abuse scandals in Ireland, differences between Ireland and Newfoundland are such that the aftermath appears to have been different for the Catholic Church as an institution. This underlines the importance of nuanced attention to context in vernacular religious theory. It is clear that the specific environmental, social, cultural, demographic, political and temporal contexts in Newfoundland framed and determined the particular broad-ranging consequences at social, institutional and individual levels that ensued there.

Nevertheless, Tom Inglis makes the point that Irish Catholics are not a homogenous group, and that there is 'considerable variety in the way that they are Catholic' (2007, 212). He identifies Orthodox Catholics as 'loyal members of the institutional Church' (Inglis 2007, 213); Cultural Catholics, who 'tend to identify less with the institutional Church and more with Catholic heritage and being Catholic' (Inglis 2007, 214); and Creative Catholics or the 'à la carte Catholic' who 'may go to Mass regularly and receive Holy Communion, but would distance him/herself from the Church regarding issues such as using contraceptives, having sex before marriage, obtaining a divorce, going to Confession, observing days of fast and abstinence, and accepting belief in hell and the Pope's

infallibility' (2007, 213). Inglis identifies as Individualist Catholics 'an increasing number of Catholics in Ireland who, while identifying themselves as Catholics, have developed a nebulous New Age orientation to religion that revolves around a search for personal authenticity, the importance of experience, a rejection of the institutional Church and its ready keys to reality, and a this-worldly conception of salvation based on individual self-perfection' (2007, 215).

In identifying different 'types' of Irish Catholics, Inglis provides a useful indicator of the range of ways in which people can choose to live their Catholicism, within, on the peripheries of, or indeed beyond the institutional church. What precisely has happened to the missing 60 percent of Catholics, in Archbishop Currie's striking claim that Mass attendance has dropped from 80 percent of Catholics in the 1970s to around 20 percent in 2012? How does the woman who, in the mid-1990s, clearly still wanted to go into a church as long as there were no priests there, self-identify now? Understanding and studying religion realistically must involve 'the questions of how far religious fields extend, how webs of relations among religious and other practices (including what we now call the secular or spiritual) shape aspects of our shared and unshared religious and secular futures' (Bender 2016, 294).

Conclusion

This case study has focussed on the aftermath of revelations of clerical sexual abuse in Newfoundland uncovered in the late 1980s as a phenomenon of sufficient age that we can discern and analyse long term impacts on both individuals and institutions. It has prompted reflection on the particular contributory circumstances and consequences of incidents where abuse is perpetrated by religious authority figures. It has attempted to give a nuanced picture of the broad range of people affected by such revelations, and the myriad ways in which people have had to – and continue to - (re)negotiate and (re)interpret their relationship with institutional religion over decades. It has thus shown the value of the nuanced approach to the study of religion encouraged by vernacular religious theory and methodology.

There can be few more controversial actions in the contemporary western milieu than the sexual abuse of minors by people entrusted with pastoral care and spiritual leadership. In the Newfoundland context, some of the supposed arbiters and upholders of moral standards and behaviour contradicted and betrayed their institutional identity by their actions, and undermined the deeply rooted religious and cultural identity of many Newfoundlanders. The crisis was further fuelled by the fact that the first

instinct of authority figures within the church appeared to be to protect their institution, to ally with perpetrators rather than victims. A crucial tipping point was reached in Newfoundland in the 1980s when the power of the institutional Church was challenged, when Catholics and others in a variety of occupations (police, media, politics, the legal profession) felt that they had to overcome clericalism and the *status quo* in order to right wrongs. As subsequent revelations in a variety of countries and institutions have proved, however, the instances of sexual abuse of minors by authority figures were neither unique nor isolated events.

Many of the socio-religious changes in Newfoundland following the public exposure of the sexual scandals might well have occurred anyway, as a result of secularising tendencies, broadening educational and cultural horizons, media and technological interconnectivity, and general societal developments encouraging more open questioning and greater public expression of dissent and diversity than a previously deferential, clericalist culture allowed. Nevertheless, these events have been identified repeatedly as catalysts for and accelerators of change, and their effects are still working through.

One problem for the Roman Catholic Church in Newfoundland (as elsewhere) is that reminders of scandals continue to appear in the media and this continues to undermine people's confidence in the institutional Church. In 2010 Deanne Fleet was involved in a CBC programme entitled *Unfinished Business*, aired to reflect on what had happened in the twenty years since the Winter Report. The programme featured Sister Nuala Kennedy, a Catholic nun and paediatrician who had served on the Winter Commission, who was proud of the work the commission had done but who felt that the findings and recommendations of the Winter Report had not received the broader attention they deserved, not least because some commentators had thought of Newfoundland as remote and exceptional. In light of the accusations of clerical sexual abuse that have emerged in the intervening years and continue to come to light, she reflected:

> [W]hile the Canadian Church in 1989 to 1992 did phenomenal work, there is this unfinished business that I think is part of why we're still upset and angry today. And why, while the offences have been stemmed – these offences are not new that you're hearing about – the stories of the way they were managed, the betrayal of trust and the failure to protect still are eating at the heart of Catholics (*Unfinished Business*, 2010).

In March 2016, at the time the spotlight was on Spotlight and its Oscar nomination, Cardinal George Pell, now Vatican Treasurer, was in the news giving evidence to Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in relation to clerical sexual abuse crimes committed in Ballarat, of which Pell had been aware but had not acted

upon. Collecting the Oscar for Best Film, producer Michael Sugar declared 'This film gave a voice to survivors, and this Oscar amplifies that voice which we hope will become a choir that will resonate all the way to the Vatican. Pope Francis, it is time to protect the children and restore the faith' (http://deadline.com/2016/02/spotlight-oscar-winner-best-picture-2016-academy-award-tom-mccarthy-1201710767/).

For many Newfoundlanders, clergy and laity alike, the issue has not been about 'restoring the faith'; it has been about reviewing the worldviews and experiences that shaped their discourse, actions, relationships with others (including other than/more than human beings), and pragmatically developing faith and practice for their future in the light of all this. The Newfoundland case study gives the opportunity to consider the broader religious and cultural impact of crisis in the context of institutional religion over an extended period of time, and the many ways in which individuals before, during and after the revelations have had to practice 'the continuous art of individual interpretation and negotiation of any number of influential sources in their practice of religion' (Primiano 2012, 383-384).

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