



How Roman Catholic Theology Can Transform Male Violence Against Women: Explaining the Role of Religion in Shaping Cultural Assumptions About Gender

Michael O'Sullivan

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This book articulates a Roman Catholic theological understanding concerning salvation in Jesus Christ that can be transformative of physical and sexual male violence against women across the world. It identifies key elements for a working definition of such complex violence, and highlights the pervasiveness and seriousness of the violence with quantitative data. For the Catholic believer the violence is graver still because a Catholic component can often be identified in the violence. This component is illustrated in the book by qualitative data about Catholic women who suffered incest. Employing the foundational and methodological framework of the praxis of authenticity in consciousness that Bernard Lonergan has identified, and that everyone can verify in their own experience, as well as its specifically Christian conversion component, the book provides grounds for making the situation of violence a theological matter. The book's argument progresses by following Lonergan's definition that theology functions to mediate between a religion and a culture and that the function of systematics in method in theology is to construct contextualised understandings for the sake of doing the truth in love. Theological meanings transformative of the situation of violence are elaborated in the book in terms of how to conceive salvation in Jesus Christ. Such an understanding of salvation is constructed by drawing firstly on meanings for salvation in scripture that are dialectically opposed to destructive meanings that the Catholic women, who suffered incest, referred to above received and believed concerning salvation. Insight into these biblical meanings is deepened by drawing on the theologies of salvation of Karl Rahner, Gustavo Gutierrez, and feminist responses to Gutierrez's theology. The transformative meaning for salvation is developed further by addressing the issues of the male Jesus as saviour and his violent death of redemption in ways that can serve the struggle to stop male violence against women. The book ends by drawing attention to recent documents on male violence against women by Church leaders that make specific reference to a transformative role for theologians and by calling for third level theology colleges to take account of the pertinent violence as a theological imperative and to collaborate with others in the field of concern as part of the function of theology.

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