

Editorial Note

This first issue of Volume 8 continues the theme started with the last issue of Volume 7, published in December, 2001: Reactions to the September 11th terrorist attack on the United States.

Although the first article focuses on the problems facing the Christian church, it underlines the importance of faith, spirituality, and the clergy in the face of disaster and crisis. It is all the more troubling when recognizing that abuse exists and flourishes within religious institutions that are so powerful and dominating for their members. In this important analytical essay, Thaeda Franz discusses the pervasive problem of child sexual abuse, a matter that has existed in religious institutions for centuries. Franz reviews the current research and thinking about this problem. The analysis suggests that the patriarchal structure of many Christian denominations has collaborated to create a conspiracy of silence and abuse rather than a context for healing. The latter section of the essay offers specific, trauma-informed suggestions about how churches can do better in preparing and supporting their leaders and congregants to deal with the topic of sexual abuse and to make the Christian community a safer place for victims. Equally importantly, Franz makes important suggestions to help secular traumatologists work more effectively with those traumatized by the sexual abuse of clergy.

The next two pieces, one a report from the field the other a letter to the editor, are written by mental health professionals who were called to New York to help their fellow Americans. Millie Marie Green, was among the contingent of Green Cross Project volunteers who were mobilized for service in New York City. This should be read in conjunction with other reports of this same mobilization (c.f., Figley & Figley, 2001; Knop, 2001; Martin, 2001). Green discusses the use of several treatment approaches utilized by Green Cross Project traumatologists as applied to six (and more) separate traumatic experiences, or “trauma imprints” for the September 11th attack. Green suggests that there is great benefit in using these treatments in combination with people who are in crisis. She notes the beneficial effect of combined treatment in alleviating the acute aspects of multiple traumas. The latter portion of Green’s article reports on the treatment of two Spanish speaking couples who were treated in unison by bilingual therapists two to three weeks after the 9/11 attack.

The next piece is a series of personal reflections by one of the most experienced and respected Traumatologists in the world, Steve Silver. Dr. Silver was one of the first to work with American Vietnam war combat veterans. In this letter to the editor he discusses what he saw in New York City following the 9/11 attacks and his reactions. The following passage is illustrative:

And whatever else we are, it looks as though almost all of us are recognizing that we belong to a common community of folks who think there really is at least one idea that binds us together.

Will we maintain that over the coming years, in the face of more terrorism and suffering and war? Hell, I don't know. But I'm beginning to think so - seems like every generation or so that kind of question gets asked and up to now the answer has always been yes, in spite of the fire, and fear, and clumsiness, and mistakes, and evil. I think a building called the Pentagon and a place called Ground Zero a heartbeat ago are going to join that list of names and places and supply the answer in a manner that should have been self evident, as all truths are.

It is a remarkable essay given that it was written within hours of his return home to Pennsylvania from New York. He had an opportunity to edit it, drawing from the wisdom of a more time to reflect. He changed nothing.

The last two elements in this issue are book reviews. Both focus on PTSD. The first is more of a textbook on the psychology of trauma and the second on the physiology of trauma.

Charles R. Figley, Editor