

*Sexual Abuse and the Church*, Constance Fain and Herbert Fain, Thurgood Marshall Law Review, Volume 31, pp. 209-238 (2006).

Sexual abuse within the church is a well-publicized issue and a challenge for ministry. There have been an increased number of lawsuits brought against clergypersons alleging sexual abuse. The claims involve the following denominations: Amish, Baptist, Buddhist, Catholic, Christian Scientist, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalian, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran, Mormon, Presbyterian, Seventh-Day Adventist, and others.

Sexual misconduct on the part of church leaders has had a profound impact on the victims, such as the inability to trust others, rejection of church or religion, depression, drug abuse, and suicide. It has also had an adverse financial impact on the church.

The seminary's role through the Theological Field Education Program is to help prepare seminarians for ordination and other leadership positions by educating them about this very important issue in contemporary ethics. This article addresses incidents of sexual misconduct in various parts of the Bible, the warning signs for clerics, the legal impact of clergy abuse, recommended solutions to this problem, how ministers should conduct themselves in their role as counselors and in their practice as ministers, and how to help victims of abuse.

"Sexual Abuse and The Church" includes a sampling of court opinions throughout the country that illustrate the severity of the problem. The article suggests protective measures that should help clergy, churches and other religious institutions avoid or reduce liability.

~ Constance Fain and Herbert Fain