

# INTRODUCTION

## to the Second Edition

**I**n the almost two decades since *The Cry of Tamar* was first written for clergy, pastoral caregivers, and religious leaders, numerous changes have occurred in the fields of advocacy, prevention, and intervention to stop violence against women. Thanks to a movement begun at least two decades before the book's first publication in 1995, there have been significant advances in awareness and the creation of social networks and institutions for the support of victims and the empowerment of survivors of sexual harassment and assault and intimate-partner violence. Religious communities and congregations have become more informed about their role in education, prevention, and responding to both victims and perpetrators of violence. Significant partnerships have been also forged across earlier divides of suspicion and mistrust between secular agencies and religious communities.

At the same time, although some government reports show declines in certain crimes, especially sexual assault,<sup>1</sup> largely due to political advocacy by women's organizations over the past three decades, violence against women and girls continues at epidemic proportions.<sup>2</sup> Literally millions of women are sexually assaulted, abused, stalked, or harassed every year. Awareness of this violence and its causes is still dim in many religious congregations and traditions. And more sophisticated responses by religious bodies in collaboration with advocates in the wider community have still not stopped the epidemic. Consider the following recent statistics:<sup>3</sup>

A large-scale survey sponsored by the Commonwealth Fund estimates that 39 percent of women have experienced some form of abuse and/or sexual assault, and approximately one third of American women are victims of intimate-partner violence (also known as domestic violence).<sup>4</sup> Statistics continue to show domestic violence as the cause of death of close to half of all female murder victims.<sup>5</sup> In the "NVAW Survey," the most comprehensive survey of the prevalence of intimate partner violence conducted to date, published in 2000 by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes found that "intimate partner violence is pervasive in U.S. society."<sup>6</sup> They calculated that 25.5 percent of U.S. women have been raped, physically assaulted, or stalked by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and close to two million women were subjected to intimate violence in a twelve-month period.<sup>7</sup> Forcible rapes *reported to law*

*enforcement*, while having declined somewhat since 1992, continued at a rate of over 90,000 per year,<sup>8</sup> but an estimated 60 to 70 percent or more of all sexual assaults go unreported.<sup>9</sup> For example, without even counting rapes by strangers or nonpartner acquaintances, Tjaden and Thoennes found that over 200,000 women are raped by an intimate partner each year (with an average of 1.6 incidents per year), resulting in over 322,000 rapes annually and 7.75 million women having been raped by a husband or partner in their lifetime.<sup>10</sup> And although the therapeutic community has clearly recognized sexual abuse and assault as traumatic, at least in recent decades, “actual or threatened sexual violation” will only appear for the first time in the official clinical definition of trauma in the DSM-5 in 2013.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to sexual assault and intimate-partner violence, numerous other sexual and gender-based crimes disproportionately affect women. In the year 2006, approximately 3.4 million adults were victims of repeated stalking (11 percent for five years or more), approximately 75 percent of them women.<sup>12</sup> Only about 40 percent of stalking incidents were reported to police.<sup>13</sup> Reports of human trafficking are increasing in the United States. According to law enforcement, 90 percent of all trafficking victims and 99 percent of sex trafficking victims (which comprise the majority of all trafficking victims)<sup>14</sup> were female, and roughly two-thirds of all victims were age seventeen or younger.<sup>15</sup> The Congressional Research Service estimated in 2006 that as many as 17,500 people were then being trafficked into the United States each year,<sup>16</sup> and as of this writing, the State Department estimates that 12.3 million adults and children are forced into labor worldwide, mostly for the sex trade—including prostitution—and forced marriages.<sup>17</sup> The Internet, because it affords perpetrators low-cost, easy access to victims and virtual anonymity, has become a vast arena for sexual exploitation, “cyberstalking,” extortion, and abuse.<sup>18</sup>

Within the church, the issue of clergy sexual abuse and professional ethics also continues to be a major concern, including both sexual abuse of children and adolescents, and adult-to-adult sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>19</sup> Recent well-publicized incidents of boundary violations across all denominations indicate that this is an area of continuing need for education and prevention.

The need sadly continues, then, for education at all levels on the dynamics of abuse and assault, and the larger cultural, social, institutional, and political contexts that perpetuate such violence. Furthermore, while both women and men, and boys and girls, are victims of sexual abuse and exploitation—and we need excellent resources to combat *all* forms of violence—women and girls still experience the vast preponderance of sexual and gender-based violence. Why this should be, both in terms of social and institutional structures that perpetuate sexism and violence against women, and in terms of a psychodynamic understanding of misogyny, I examine in depth in chapters 1 and 2. We would all probably, on some level, prefer to sweep these realities under the rug, to believe that abuse and sexual assault are both gender-neutral and rare. The first step, however, toward addressing such violence realistically and effectively is to see it clearly, including its more subtle and disguised forms—because we still live in a culture that denies the extent and gendered nature of sexual violence, and that in fact reinforces it on a daily basis throughout all levels of society (including religion), with words, images, and institutional structures that perpetuate the objectification of women and girls.

Churches are therefore still in need of resources to shore up their good efforts to keep the issue of violence against women “on the table” as they plan for mission and work to forge partnerships with social agencies in their communities.<sup>20</sup> This second edition is an effort to continue this conversation, both to keep factual information updated and available, and to revisit ways in which people of faith might think about violence against women and girls in order to respond most helpfully and work most effectively for healing and justice in their local communities and the wider world.

## A Revised Edition

Because many of the basic dynamics of violence against women have not changed significantly in the past two decades, most of the content of this edition is similar to the first edition, with updated facts, statistics, and citations. However, in at least three arenas our understanding of abuse and assault has been expanded and challenged. The first change is in the arena of political action and movements for gender justice in the United States, which is the geographical context of this book. Numerous changes in American legislation and judicial practice, as well as strategies for advocacy, prevention, and education, warrant our attention.

A second major change is the dramatic increase in movements worldwide (both religious and secular) to name and confront the various forms in which violence against women occurs. Empowered by a movement called “postcolonialism,” such efforts have been undertaken increasingly by advocates within their own national contexts (rather than coming from European and North American initiatives). As a result, more culturally relevant and effective strategies have been developed under the leadership of women in their own societies. It is beyond the scope of this book, which focuses on prevention and intervention efforts in North America, to outline all these initiatives in detail. However, some broad outlines of these global developments will be summarized here and references to further resources provided. We have much to learn in the United States from the insights and strategies of global efforts to combat violence against women, both politically and theologically.

A third change is in the arena of postmodern cultural analysis. This involves the ways in which we *theorize* violence against women. In particular, how have we conceptualized the identities, roles, and relative responsibilities of victims, survivors, perpetrators, and witnesses of violence? And what are the increasingly ambiguous and complex ways in which personhood and gender have been constructed, which can either reinforce or resist such violence? I will describe some of these theoretical developments in summary form here, and attempt to reflect the complexity of these developments throughout the rest of this revised volume.

## Political Action and Gender Justice in the United States

Successful national legislative campaigns developed over many years resulted in the passage of the federal Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), first voted in 1984, and the Violence against Women Act (VAWA), first voted in 1994, both with