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Preface

This is a study of spiritual abuse, and abusive discipleship, and how you can identify whether or not you are a victim of it. When I talk about churches, especially the ones I have attended, I am not directing criticism of those churches or their pastors/elders. None of the churches, including the large Charismatic church I attended as a deacon for seven years, were abusive in total. While I recognise that it was infected at one stage with the Shepherding doctrine¹ the infection was not widespread throughout the church and it did not become really apparent until around 1976/77 not long before I left and went to another church. It is also directed at non-abused believers and disciples, to make them aware of the difference between genuine discipleship and that based on false ideas and doctrines. I

¹ "Shepherding "Movement" – 'It began when four well-known Charismatic teachers, Bob Mumford, Derek Prince, Charles Simpson, and Don Basham, along with Ern Baxter and John Poole, formed the organization that would be 'the center of one of the most violent controversies (i.e., the Discipleship/Shepherding controversy) in Protestant charismatic history,' Christian Growth Ministries (CGM), headquartered in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida'. from Wikipedia). It is interesting to note that in 1989 Bob Mumford recognised the damage that the Shepherding doctrine was causing to churches and the lives of good believers. He issued "a public statement of repentance...acknowledged abuses that had occurred because of his teaching on submission. This emphasis resulting "perverse and unbiblical obedience" to leaders. He publicly repented "with sorrow" and asked for forgiveness. He also admitted that families had been severely disrupted and lives turned upside down." (Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches That Abuse*; 1992, Zondervan.)

believe in discipleship and that being in a relationship with a mentor is a good thing to have, when the need arises during times of trial and uncertainty in our lives.

I mention Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in this book, and I assure my readers that I am not criticising the organisation as a whole. I have a number of friends associated with it, and I value them as good brothers in Christ, whose mission is to win sinners to Christ. One of the principal teachers involved with YWAM was an elder in the Charismatic church I attended 1973-79, and I value my memory of him as one of the significant men of God in New Zealand, and around the world during the latter half of the 20th Century. I believe that too few people and churches valued his ministry to the extent that they should have, which caused him to be an “unsung hero”, but nevertheless, I see him as one of “God’s Generals”. The account of one person’s experience with “confession sessions” in the Discipleship Training School he attended and my comments about it are intended to show that although the leader and participants were sincerely wanting to clear themselves with God, warnings still needed to show how mind control can affect even the most godly leaders and believers.

The devil doesn’t bother to attack those over whom he has total control. They are no threat to him. But he will try and deceive, and attack the best and most godly believers and leaders if he can. I have no doubt that the founders of the Shepherding Movement were sincere godly men who were deceived by a doctrine fed to them by a lying spirit. This is not a personal criticism of those men or their ministries. Many good believers will attest that the writing and preaching of these men brought them to Christ, and led to them being baptised with the Spirit. My view is that “those who have not been deceived at any stage of their lives, may cast the first stone at these men.”

However, I am not casting stones of condemnation and inappropriate criticism. I believe what I have written is fair debate and questioning. What I offer are my own opinions which I believe are supported by the New Testament. If I have made any errors of doctrine or accuracy in relating my memories of situations and events in any church environments where I have been involved, these are my fault entirely.

I acknowledge those who have contributed to my thinking, especially the work of Mary Alice Chrnalogar, and Neil Anderson. These and other books that have influenced me are listed in the Reading List after the main text of this book,

I also acknowledge the assistance and advice of Graeme Cooksley who read the drafts, and gave me helpful doctrinal advice, and insights of church and personal situations and issues, where mine have been incomplete.

Most of all I want to thank Rodney Francis, founder of The Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry, who has been a faithful mentor and who is the one who has given me the confidence to put my ideas and opinions on to the printed page, in a number of articles and books over the years.

Introduction

A New Zealand small town independent church started off as a home group with around 20 members meeting on a Wednesday night. There was a move of The Holy Spirit among that group, and new members were being added to the point where the leaders decided to rent a local hall, and have Sunday meetings. The growth of the congregation continued until 80 people were worshiping each Sunday morning. One Sunday the church received a visit from the lead pastor of a prominent Charismatic denomination. He arrived along with his “prophet”.²

The visiting pastor preached a sermon about the necessity of “covering”, in which he told the congregation that it was important for a small church to be under the “covering” of a larger, more established denomination in order to do the will of God more effectively. The prophet then went around the congregation and gave a number of personal prophecies which backed up the pastor’s sermon. As a result of that meeting, the leaders made the decision to come under the umbrella of that denomination and the church became another church with that denominational name. An approved pastor, trained by that denomination was appointed to lead the church. This pastor held to the belief that he was the principal authority in the church and every member had to be accountable to him; in other words up to this point, to “come under his authority”. Over a period of a year, that church lost most of its membership and was back down to less than 25 people. Understandably, within a short time afterward, the church closed down.

² In this particular denomination they had appointed prophets whose ministry was to receive the Word of God for the people. The authority of the prophet and his prophecies were to be accepted without question. It seems that Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 14:29 where prophecies were to be evaluated and not accepted automatically.

Now, when it was a home group and then afterward an independent fellowship, what was its main mission? I was associated with that fellowship for a while and I know that its purpose was to present Christ and what He had done on the cross for us to the people of that small town. I know of a man who accepted Christ while I was there. I was told that he was one of the hardest to reach men in the town but when presented with the gospel and the power of God he came to Christ.

Now, when that denominational lead-pastor came to visit, what was his mission? It seems it was to add the church to his “empire”. What was the prophet’s role? To get authoritative “words from God” to stamp authority on the pastor’s message. So, what was the appointed pastor’s role? It was to bring those people under his authority, and to control them to comply with what **he** thought was best for them.

There have been some attempts at exorcisms in “Christian” churches where they involved excessive violence in the form of beating demons out of victims, to the degree where the victim in many cases died. What causes a person to submit to this? And how does the “pastor” know the person is possessed of a demon so badly that the person requires submission to physical violence on her? I say “her” because it usually involves women who are accused of being possessed. What kind of mind-control makes women submit to such a cruel and harsh procedure, when kindness and gentleness are important components on how pastors and leaders should work with those they are ministering to?

The question has to be asked of the above examples: when did the spiritual ministry of these churches and its leaders turn into spiritual abuse? Are these churches genuinely Christian?

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