

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

1. As I was on the spot, and as one of those involved came to see me on February 1, I have now talked at length to thirteen of the twenty-two young men involved, and one who was on the verge of joining in. So it seems sense that I should get some of it on to paper before we meet on March 16th. /18-
2. The Practice began in 1978, with J. offering a 17-year old the choice of a beating from him or being reported to parents/school. He chose the beating given with cane in the summer house. *for shoplifting.*
3. For a term or two, it continued with four 17-year olds, on the bare bottom with gym shoe (because it leaves less evidence) but was voluntarily accepted as a deterrent to masturbation. Beatings varied from a dozen to 40 strokes. (In all mention of figures I quote what they have told me, in every case taking the low figure). These were technically all criminal offences under the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, Sec.47.
4. Since summer 1979 it has gradually escalated, in frequency and severity of beatings and in the number of men involved.
5. The motives were always seen as good by operators and participants - the sanctifying of young Christian men, and the blessings of fatherly discipline. I believe this but cannot really understand it. Prayer, praise and loving Christian concern in Christ's name were evident at every point. There was never the slightest evidence of overt sexual excitement or interference. But the psychiatrist describes it as suppressed masochistic sexual activity (or sadistic I suppose, in the operators). Several men simply said 'I trusted J' 'I went in it on trust'.
6. The scale and severity of the practice was horrific. Five of the 13 I have seen were in it only for a short time. Between them they had 12 beatings and about 650 strokes. The other 8 received about 14,000 strokes: 2 of them having some 8,000 strokes over the three years. The others were involved for one year or 18 months. 8 spoke of bleeding on most occasions ('I could feel the blood spattering on my legs' - 'I was bleeding for 3 1/2 weeks' 'I fainted sometime after a severe beating'). I have seen bruised and scored buttocks, some two-and-a-half months after the beating. Beatings of 100 strokes for masturbation, 400 for pride and one of 800 strokes for some undisclosed 'fall' are recorded. The beatings were with garden canes, with some sort of a handle. S, wanting 'to be the best for God' beat as hard as he could. A year or so ago 'training' beatings of some 75 strokes every 3 weeks were instituted, as being better than only going down after a 'fall', though these persisted. One told me he was receiving beatings at least every 4/5 days one vacation. The custom of semi nakedness gave way to complete nakedness 'to increase humility'. For training beatings a man undressed himself, for 'falls' he submitted to being undressed by the operator.
7. By design or by circumstances, the system seems to have 'conned' men into accepting the beatings. There was a first talk on Wholeheartedness with great emphasis on naming sins and making a list of one's personal failings, a second talk on Sex adding to the pressure, and then one or two personal talks when for the first time it was suggested that the list should be shared. Then there would be mention of the 'blessing' to be had through this system and a fair amount of pressure ("You want to be the best, don't you? Let me be a helper to you ...") and the invitation to visit. At this stage the beating was often thought of as 'six of

the best on the seat of the pants'. It was usually not until arrival, prayer and talk, and actually reaching the shed that the severity of the beating was mentioned, and the benefits of nakedness as a self-humbling was disclosed. At that stage there was considerable persuasion for anyone who held back. It had almost become a cult, with a powerful group dynamic.

8. Immediately after the beating the man lay on the bed, while J and/or S would kneel and pray, linking arms with him and kissing him on the shoulder and back.
9. Quite separate from these post-beating embraces, several have spoken of J's putting his arms around them at emotional moments, and one of being kissed on the neck.
10. Setting aside one's sense of the outrage against human dignity and the cruelty of all this in the name of the Lord, numbers of reasons against the practice emerge. Those I have seen are as follows:
11. Scriptures used commonly were: Hebrews xii.5-11, 2 Samuel vii.13, St Luke xii, and many 'spare the rod' and 'fathers and sons' verses in Proverbs. But none would have suggested the practice to anyone not already emotionally committed (cf. the hold the cults have), the fathers and child verses do not apply (they were neither sons nor children).
12. Similar practices (not exactly the same, to my knowledge) are known and regarded as aberrations in church history.
13. All Christian leaders would condemn the practice.
14. J and S saw this as a 'ministry' from God. But the 'ministry' of discipline in this sense, was secret, self-appointed and never approved by other Christian leaders (cf. Acts xiii.1-2), and of course unknown in lists of ministries (cf. Ephesians iv.11, etc.).
15. The knowledge of other people's sins, and 'power' over them through their humiliation, nakedness and beating, is exceedingly bad for the operators.
16. There was a very frequent association with sexual sins of a comparatively minor kind (masturbation and impure thoughts) and too many sexual overtones, though it is clear that there was never any overt sexual activity.
17. The practice destroys the direct access of the believer to the Lord (Hebrews x etc.) and makes the way to be always through one of the operators with whom sins were shared. This seems to strike at the great Reformation truth, and is very akin to the Roman Catholic system of confession and penance, with the list of sins to be shared with J and S, and the severity of the beatings being proportionate to the seriousness of the fall as they saw it.
18. It magnifies sins of thought and other little daily failures and consequently builds up a guilty conscience when everything is not shared with J. Apart from the known suicide attempt, another man got as far as writing a suicide note and sitting looking at a bottle of pills because he could not go on with the beating and 'this was the only way of holiness'. And another is still suffering pangs of guilty conscience over failings of seven years ago, revived through this practice.
19. It keeps young men as children (the cane and the cuddles might be suitable between a father and a small boy). It keeps them immature and unable to make their own judgments and fight their own battles.

20. S was brought into sharing the 'ministry' in the summer of 1980; two others had been approached, one of whom was unwilling to take part.
21. The rehabilitation of S and one of the others who has been in it for four years is a cause of concern. The latter, with a very unstable home background, is very dependent on J indeed (and/or J on him?). All but one of the others I have spoken to seem amazingly resilient.
22. The whole thing displays frightening blindness: in the operators who were blind to Scripture, to sense, to propriety, to possible consequences for Gospel work, to men's welfare, to church history and to the very heart of the Gospel; and in the participants who could voluntarily accept such treatment as God's appointed way of blessing.