

Kenneth J. Garrett, *In the House of Friends: Understanding and healing from spiritual abuse in Christian churches*. Eugene, OR. Wipf & Stock, 2020, 108 pages with bibliography and further suggested reading, paperback. ISBN: 978-1-7252-6602-5

Church can hurt! Following any significant religious abuse there comes a flood of emotion, confusion and disillusionment. Sometimes people exit as *fire-breathing dragons* who's primary goal is to get even, but more often doing themselves further harm. Others may appear as *icebergs*, cold and distant, with buried pain and deep unresolved issues. Over time the dragons learn to contain their fire and icebergs start to warm and disclose their pain. When people are ready to start their healing journey they need compassion, insight and support from those that have preceded them in their own similar recovery. This engaging autobiographic book offers not only insights and compassion, but does so succinctly and with clarity.

In the House of Friends, the reader is introduced to the author, his family and their story of religious abuse while in a very unhealthy Christian church. He constructively starts by leveling the linguistic playing field. This is done by addressing the importance of identifying how it is that the term 'cult' can and should be, at times, applied to even those churches that may present as doctrinally orthodox. This is not a popular suggestion, but the author rightfully understands the important adage of, *you must name it to tame it*.

The author asks many common questions about religious abuse. Is spiritual abuse addressed in the Bible? How do abusive pastors get away with their abuse? Why would anyone join an abusive church and what are the seven characteristics of such a church? What are three basic practices to produce recovery from religious abuse? What are six primary areas of damage by abusive churches that need to be addressed? What are the important things for a pastor to know about the wounded Christian? What are the characteristics of a healthy church? And, finally, what are the four most important things for the family or friends of people still involved in an abusive church to remind themselves? To these questions and more the author offers humble and thoughtful answers.

I have been working in the field of cultic studies for nearly four decades. Prior to this time, I spent many years in an abusive totalist aberrant Christian organization (TACO). What the author suggests in this book is spot-on. This is an excellent critique of unhealthy forms of Christianity and an outstanding resource for those effected by religious abuse. The book is exceedingly user friendly, compassionate and well-informed. I highly encourage it's reading for those hurting from involvement in a Christian church and who are searching for emotional and intellectual hand-holds for how to progress in one's recovery from religious abuse.

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