
Godly Wisdom, Spiritual Abuse, or Cult?

Do you wonder if God ever grieves over spiritually abusive Christianity and says: “Oh, Beloved Eklesia, Redeemed of the Lord, Bride of Christ, Salt of the Earth. You are not what you were created to be. You are not the sanctuary of God or of man. You are not a safe place. You are not a holy place. You are not beautiful for habitation. You have tied heavy weights upon people, you have inverted values, and you have shut off the kingdom from those who were seeking it.”

The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse (p233)

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Notice of Authorship

This report was written in its entirety by its sole author, Ed Palmer, who spent nearly four years at this ministry observing and attending three to five worship services each week. There was no input whatsoever from any ministry discussed in this report. This is especially true concerning the ministries of AFCM, Living Word or the Assembly of God Churches who may take exception to some or all of the contents of this report. The responses of these ministries to this report, if any, are attached and shown as part of Appendix A.

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Introduction

This report is about cults and in specific Bill Matthews' ministry located at Solid Rock Church in Elk River, Minnesota.

Relevant Biblical Concepts

Search me, O God

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalm 139: 23-24 (NKJ)

Contend Earnestly

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Jude 1: 3 (Amp)

Double Mindedness

“[For being as he is] a man of two minds (hesitating, dubious, irresolute), [he is] unstable *and* unreliable *and* uncertain about everything [he thinks, feels, decides].”

James 1: 8 (Amp)

“Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].”

James 4: 8 (Amp)

Deaths meticulously planned

TODAY'S FOCUS:
Mass suicide
in California

39 cult members
apparently mixed
drugs and vodka

From News Services

RANCHO SANTA FE, Calif. — Thirty-nine members of a high-tech cult apparently killed themselves in shifts with drugs and vodka after packing their bags in anticipation of a rendezvous with a UFO they believed was trailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

The men and women also mailed out videos in which their leader described the awaited space encounter and members came before the camera two at a time to say their goodbyes.

"It seemed to be a group decision," San Diego County Medical Examiner Brian Blackbourne said Thursday at a news conference detailing the death scene. "It was very planned, sort of immaculately carried out."

Turn to SUICIDE on A15

Also on A14:

— A look at the group's apparent leader.

— Web site was based with Eden Prairie Internet service provider.



Associated Press

Members of the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office removed a body Thursday from the house in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., where 39 people of a cult committed suicide. It is believed that the cult members killed themselves with a combination of drugs and alcohol so they could rendezvous with a spaceship they believed was trailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

Logical Ending To Cult

Heaven's Gate members took extreme views to logical end

By Clancy Sigal

Calling any group a "cult" is a wonderful way of punishing its members and distancing us from them. By all reports, the Heaven's Gate members were remarkably cheerful about committing suicide. Their videotaped last words to the world seem levelheaded and unforced. It's a hell of a way to go: the purple cloths, buzz haircuts and Nike sneakers. But who is to say that they were, "wounded, foolish followers" or "weak and wounded," as editorialists have described them.

To trash their beliefs in UFOs or their faith in leader Marshall Herff Applewhite ("Do") is fine. But to patronize and diminish them as human beings is to replicate the anxious conditions that may have propelled them

into Applewhite's and Betty Lu Nettles' arms in the first place.

Clearly, these 39 fairly well-educated, productive people with a fondness for "Star Trek" and longing for the afterlife were uncomfortable in their own skins and repelled by the world we share. Except for the way they chose to express their brotherhood and sisterhood and how they ended their lives, what makes them so "wounded" and "foolish"?

I'm a skeptic. UFOs are for the birds. Hale-Bopp is a lovely comet, not a sign of impending doom. But especially at Easter-time, I have more than a little sympathy for "cultists" who act with such deep revulsion for the mixed values of individual achievement and self-promotion that most of us grudgingly accept.

History tends to be kind to

the self-martyred. There are those who respect the Albigensians who died at the stake for their heretical Gnostic beliefs, which were not light years distant from Heaven's Gate's. Others venerate religious groups either kneeling to or awaiting a Messiah. And let us not even think about the channeling, crystal-gazing New Agers among us who may be at least as dotty as the dead Website addicts.

So why not extend the same measured respect to dead "cultists" who take the most terrible step clearsightedly, even joyfully?

We disagree. We are repelled. We insist we are baffled. But is there none among us who, shorn of the weird and unusual aspects of Heaven's Gate, does not feel, at times, what they felt most of the time, that it's a

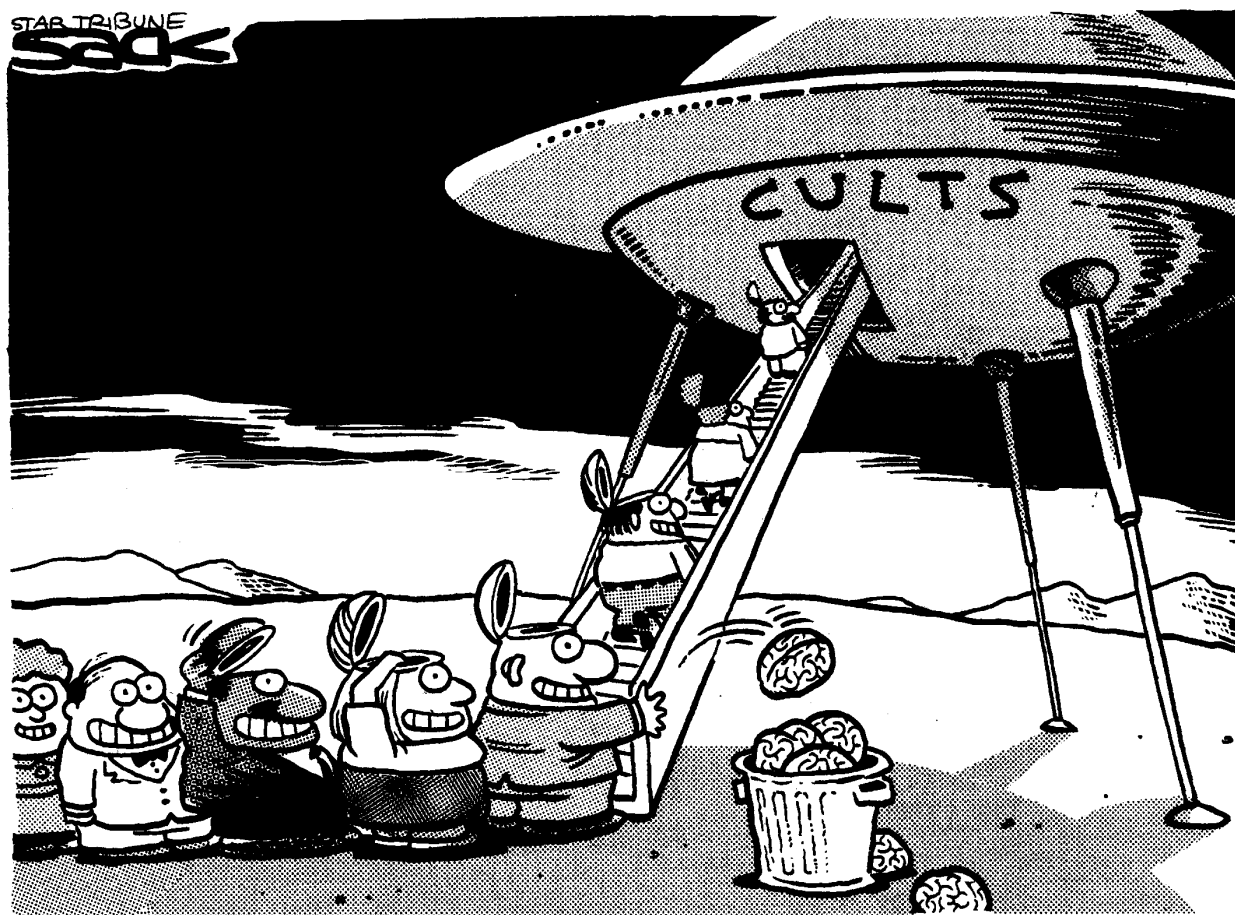
lousy world I can't fix up and maybe there is a better world somewhere else? Does it truly matter if that better world is to be reached by a UFO vehicle or by prayer or by heavenly intercession or by God's will?

Yes, they were wounded, in a way more common than we care to acknowledge. Probably foolish. But let's be very careful not to expel "cultists" from the human race altogether because they chose an extreme, bizarre, self-destructive way of sending a message that does not seem altogether illogical at a time of mainstream religious celebration of the dead, the risen and the crucified.

— Clancy Sigal, a novelist and screenwriter in Los Angeles, wrote this article for the Los Angeles Times.

Members Throw Away Brains

On March 28, 1997, we were reminded that one tragedy of cults can be a mass suicide. All thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult in Rancho Santa Fe, California took their lives in anticipation of being carried off to a more glorious life by a space craft supposedly traveling with the comet Hale-Bopp. They supposed that the space craft was coming to pick up their souls. Sack's cartoon in the Star Tribune paper presents a summary viewpoint.



Spiritual Abuse More Common

These people could have been brain-washed or just mentally lazy. They decided to let the leader do all the thinking. Some people gladly give up control in their lives to someone with all the “spiritual” answers. Someone they feel they can trust. Someone who will take care of them. All of this, of course, is done in the name of God. After all, the leader is “anointed” from God! He’s better connected (to God). When you question him, you question God. Right? Suicide may be a major tragedy. However, “spiritual-abuse” is also a major tragedy more common in cults albeit less well known. False Biblical teaching and spiritual abuse are common to a local Christian cult.

They're Preying On Weak Christians

The following excerpt is part of a report written by the Associated Press and published on America OnLine. Having recently visited the Heaven's Gate Cult, Reverend Mike Dew from New Mexico states: "They're preying on weak Christians. . . . They'll use the terms 'Jesus' and 'God,' but not in the traditional way. . . . If you're not careful, you'll miss what they're doing."

They called each other brother and sister, dressed alike and wore buzz haircuts. But their beliefs were odd by any standard; modern civilization, wrote a student identified online only as Smmodity, "seems ready to be recycled."

A self-described prophetic minister from New Mexico, the Rev. Mike Dew, recalled meeting a Heaven's Gate leader eight months ago.

"They're preying on weak Christians," said Dew, of the Prophetic Voices of the Wilderness in Mountainair, N.M. "They're portraying themselves as ascended masters or a 'Higher Source.' They'll use the terms 'Jesus' and 'God,' but not in the traditional way. If you're not careful, you'll miss what they're doing."

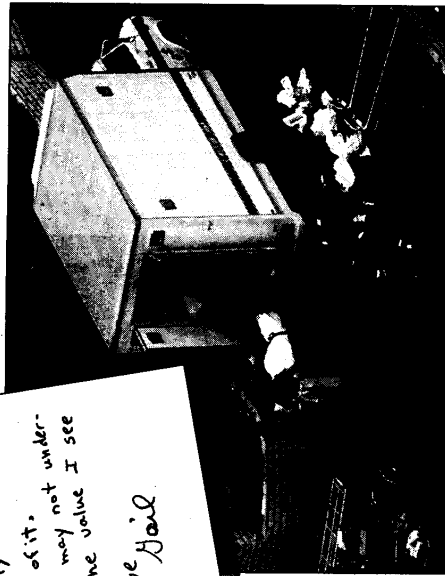
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What Is A Weak Christian?

A person might ask what constitutes a weak Christian? Several answers are possible. However, I can't think of any answer more significant than the Christian who is ignorant of God's Word. The Christian who doesn't read and study God's Word. The Christian who just blindly accepts what the minister says (about God's Word). Recent studies indicate that only about 15% of Christians actually read or study God's Word (Bible). As a group, Christians faithfully trust their ministers. Ministers are not suppose to lie. When this trust is coupled with ignorance of God's Word, cult leaders become very powerful. Many people, in a local Christian congregation, have never even realized that they unwittingly have become part of a cult. They don't realize that the minister lies to them. They are ignorant of God's Word. They are ignorant about their own ministry. "If its okay with the pastor, it's okay with me."

Mom + Dad,
You are probably wondering exactly what I've decided to do with my life. Until recently nothing had ever been able to offer me any real motivation, I wanted + needed more. This is why I couldn't play the regular games of this society. I felt like I had outgrown it, I just ~~can't~~ ^{really} didn't see the value I see in my pursuit, and maybe even feel proud. Love
Hail

Gail Maeder in 1992 and a 1994 note she wrote to her parents, Robert and Alice Maeder of Sag Harbor, N.Y. At right, authorities in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., remove victims of last week's mass suicide — including Maeder.



New York Times

Be wari-er of cults' power for abuse

NORTHFIELD, MINN. — Once again, a madman with a Messiah complex has led his flock off the deep end. It seems that hardly a year goes by without news of yet another fringe group acting out bizarre behaviors, on the order of a revered leader, in the name of some True Cause. And once again, the talk show hosts and newspeople ask “How could this happen? What makes people act so irrationally?” Professors of theology at leading uni-

ask any person, "Would you give up everything that is important to you, sever all contact with family and friends, stifle all dissent, obey the leader without question, let the group make all personal decisions, shave your head (or castrate yourself), until the day you will commit ritual suicide (killing your own children) as well, as in Jonestown?" everyone would say — "Are you kidding?!" Yet it happens. Not because people chose to, but because they get involved in a process they don't understand.

In our culture, religious freedom itself has become a sacred belief. I'm not suggesting it should be otherwise. But we must recognize the potential for abuse that exists and start asking some hard questions. Does freedom of religion really give extremist groups the right to deceive, manipulate and exploit? The right to use demonstrable techniques of mind control to virtually enslave naive young people? How can we best educate young people to recognize undue influence? How can we instill a sense of

healthy skepticism? What are they missing in their lives that attracts them to such groups in the first place? When does sincere religious faith become dangerous, uncompromising extremism?

Facing this problem head on will not only help protect young people from abuse, but also help foster our own spiritual growth.

— *Todd Harvey is part owner and manager of a family business in Northfield.*

Set Up Occurs Over Time

Committing suicide seems like the act of a crazy person. A mental case. The illogical act of a sick person. However, to the people at Heaven's Gate, this was simply not the case. It was, in fact, probably a very logical "next step" to many—if not all—of them. Think about it for a moment. Many of the men in this cult were castrated. They had already cut their testicles off. What a female friend of mine said is very true. "If these men had the guts to cut their testicles off, suicide was not that big of a deal for them."

Let's put this suicide in perspective with time. In the first scenario, you (a prospective cult member) visit the cult you are interested in. For discussion purposes, let's assume it is Heaven's Gate in Rancho Santa Fe. On the very first day, you are told that next week everyone is going to participate in a unique "out of body" experience. Participation will allow your soul to travel in space with everyone else's. You are told that the space craft traveling next to the comet Hale-Bopp is scheduled to pickup everyone's soul (in the group) next Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. sharp (cult leader is always very specific). You get the drift immediately and your mind clearly translates the discussion as follows: "They want me to participate in a mass suicide."

Remember that this is your very first visit to the cult. What do you do? You bag it. Exit, stage right and very fast. Why? Because, you are not ready for death. Death is too big a leap for you on your very first visit. Quite simply, you have not had enough exposure (in the cult & to its leader) to be guided mentally into where you would think about this (suicide) as a reasonable course of action. You still have the ability to reason mentally. You still are questioning the activities of the cult. You have not entered into a situation where you blindly trust and blindly follow the leader. You have not been indoctrinated, yet.

However, fast forward a few years to a second scenario. You joined the cult years earlier and now fully and unquestionably agree with the thinking of the leader of the cult. You believe he is "anointed" of God. Maybe, you even believe he is Jesus himself (in His second coming). At some point, as an act of loyalty to the leader, you get yourself physically castrated. This proves that you are no longer tied to "this world." And, for sure, that you are not tied to "this body" anymore. You are of God's Kingdom--not of this world. The cult leader even quotes Bible verses to you such as John 15:19 "As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." The phrase "out of the world" in this Bible verse certainly has some interesting connotations in the context of the Heaven's Gate cult. Doesn't it?

You are told that the Bible clearly states that "if you love the world you hate God." Where in the Bible you say? In James 4:4, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." You use to love to study the Word of God. However, with your currently busy cult schedule, you don't seem to have the time to read and study it much (any more).

The cult leader espouses you on a regular basis to study God's Word, but he keeps you so busy (with church activities) working for the cult that, on a practical basis, there is no time available to study God's Word (or to visit with friends and family). You, instead, take the cult leader's word

that his quotations are verbatim read from the Bible. In short, you are mentally spoon fed exactly what the cult leader wants you to have. You think that the “anointed man of God” is giving you “special revelations” from God. Reserved, I might add, only for God’s holy “last-days remnant.” That is because the “outside” world, including your friends and family, would simply not understand “God’s special revelations” to the group. You are indoctrinated into the beliefs of the cult leader. Whether or not you want to admit it or even recognize it.

A couple of times you gently question the cult leader on what he has presented to you. You are told that these are difficult spiritual concepts to understand. But, if you pray about them long and hard enough, God will reveal Himself to you. You grow to understand that the cult leader is “very” connected to God because of his intense prayer life and “walk with God.” Once, you think the cult leader has misinterpreted the Bible and you challenge him. You are told that you don’t have the spiritual authority to rebuke him. Furthermore, you apparently have a problem with spiritual authority. Therefore, you need to repent and pray about it. You fail to do any more mental homework. You acquiesce to the cult leader’s viewpoint and decide that these matters are best left to his judgment. They are, after all, difficult spiritual issues to understand. You grow to a complete trust in the cult leader’s judgment. Whatever he asks you to do, you do because you feel that you are obeying God when you obey the cult leader. It makes life easier.

A little while later you willingly join in the mass suicide discussions. However, you don’t believe it is suicide. For you, it is simply the next logical and last remaining step in shedding what has become a very burdensome earthly body. You are on your way to be with God!

The Difference Is Only Time

The only difference between the above two scenarios is time. A cult leader needs time to move an individual far enough along mentally to the point that he or she will no longer question his authority. I have added some Christian terminology to the above scenario because I have personally witnessed the cult activities of a so-called Christian minister over a span of 3-4 years. I have seen the movement in time between what was “right-on” spiritually to what became “corrupt” spiritually. I have seen men and women of God who seek a deeper relationship with Him -- surrender themselves to the mind control activities of a cult leader. A Christian cult leader.

Think It Can’t Happen Here?

Reflecting upon the “Heaven’s Gate” cult suicide the day the information was revealed to the public, I distinctively recall the thoughts: “**Think it can’t happen right here in Elk River? Think again!**” My mind was mentally directing the question to the editor of the local paper.

Later in the day, I ran across a friend. I remember the glazed look in her eyes as I mentioned why I would not attend the church anymore. It was a very graphic and poignant moment as God revealed the revelation that “the ability to be reasoned with” had no place in our discussion. For her, there simply was no need to reason. Her mind was settled. I was on the “outside” and was no longer “connected” to God’s special revelations that were unique to “the inside of” her church.

Anointed Bill Matthews

I personally can count two - three dozen people who have given up their ability to reason and are now blindly following (without question) Bill Matthews at Solid Rock Church in Elk River, MN. They have given up “their firm foundation” which was the “Word of God.” In its place, they have (without question or testing) accepted the errant words of Bill Matthews (the anointed one) as the true Gospel. Devout Christians who are in the process of throwing away their brains.

Help! It's Homework!

Why do people want to turn their lives over to someone else? Well, for one, it seems we humans are always trying to skip our homework. We are lazy people. I have seen it in many areas of life. We may even do our homework (Bible study) for a while and then quit when we become convinced there is no need to continue. We turn our reasoning and testing over to “blind trust.” We know and trust our lawyer, for example, so why should we read the fine print in his legal contracts. We spend 15-20 hours per week in Solid Rock Church listening to Pastor Matthews. Isn't that enough Bible Study for the week? We don't need to read the Bible outside of church. Do we? We are getting enough instruction inside of the church. Besides, I can't seem to find the time. What, with all the church activities. You know, soul saving, tent revivals, etc. Really?

Since when did God tell us to quit reading His Word and blindly trust a minister (Matthews)? And, if you attend church every waking moment of your life (as Matthews wants you to do) -- exactly when could you read God's Word -- even if the cult leader espouses you to do so? When people fail to “continually” hold their leaders accountable to God's Word -- cults like Heaven's Gate, over time, evolve into some kind of disaster. What would seem absurd to others becomes logical in a cult member's mind. Because, at that time, it (the action) requires no big leap of faith -- only a small incremental and logical mental step from the leader's prior teachings.

You Who Loved God's Word

There is a good example of a man who use to love God's Word more than anything else in life. I think he honestly believes that when he reaches the face of God -- he will hear the words “Well done thou good and faithful servant.” He believes this because it is part of the sales pitch that the cult leader Matthews uses. However, I really wonder. Is this what God will say to him?

Matthews, whom this person faithfully follows, requires unwavering loyalty and virtually “all of his spare time.” After all, he (the cult leader) is “anointed” of God. He (the anointed one of God) knows what is best for you. Because he (the anointed one) is in more direct contact with God than you are. (At least you think he is because that is what he [the cult leader] has told you.) As a direct consequence, this person and his wife have virtually no time to spend with their children or grandchildren. Let alone other family members or friends. It really is zero time. There is only time for the church activities which run days, nights and weekends. All year around, of course. You know (family), “I'm saving souls for Jesus. If not me, who?”

Lack of Balance

Will God, as this person believes, say: “Well done.” Or, will God tell him that he was worse than an infidel because he failed to take care of his family as directed. That his life lacked any balance towards his family and friends. That he was misguided and indoctrinated into a cult all the time that he thought he was serving Him. 1 Timothy 5:8 states: “If anyone fails to provide for his relatives, and especially for those of his own family, he has disowned the faith [by failing to accompany it with fruits] and is worse than an unbeliever (infidel) [who performs his obligation in these matters].” This (providing) means more than just mere physical sustenance.

It is a father’s responsibility to lead his family in spiritual matters. This responsibility extends down to his grandchildren. **What kind of grandparents abandon their family? The same kind that abandon the Word of God.** They don’t fully realize that they do this. However, it is the end result of their actions and behavior. They still believe, in their hearts, that they are Godly people who love their family (dearly). They believe they are doing God’s will. Still, God never required Abraham to actually sacrifice Isaac. So why do they believe the cult leader [Matthews] when he tells them the sacrifice of their family is required (because their family and friends won’t understand). After all, they are part of God’s “last-days remnant.” The last small group of people who are keeping themselves holy for God. Those “outside” would only corrupt them and lead them astray. Wow -- Bill, talk about an elitist attitude.

What about the unsaved members of this persons’ family? Who will be the harvest worker for them? Hasn’t God already sent this father and grandfather into his family? How sad it will be if a grandchild of this person rots in hell because he was too busy with cult activities.

Comparing Matthews’ Ministry

This report deals in depth with the Bill Matthews’ Ministry at Solid Rock Church in Elk River. I spent nearly four years observing this ministry. For at least two-three years, everything seemed okay. Except, perhaps, for the massive amount of people that were exiting the church. I couldn’t quite grasp why so many people were leaving. In the time I was there, I would estimate that between 400-600 people left the church. Then, on 11/20/96, Bill Matthews perverted (changed) the Word of God in such a way that I could not ignore it. **God gave me a simple choice to make. His Holy Word or the word of Bill Matthews. I chose God’s Word.** The Bible, sacred to many people, was simply thrown out the window in favor of his (Matthews’) opinion on 11/20/96. Many people, thoroughly indoctrinated, have yet to figure out that Bill Matthews’ is a cult leader and that the essence of his ministry is service to his family’s needs.

Dare I compare Bill Matthews’ Ministry in Elk River, Minnesota to the Heaven’s Gate cult in Rancho Santa Fe, California? Yes, I do! Not to imply that there is any danger of a mass suicide. I don’t believe that is the case. However, Bill Matthews’ . . .

Ministry Scores High As A Cult

In my research, I have found that the Bill Matthews' Ministry exhibits all (100%) of the characteristics of a cult as defined by the Cult Information Centre in the United Kingdom. Further, many people in Matthews' ministry have given up their ability to reason or to be reasoned with. This is not godly wisdom. **It is the common thread between both groups. These are the reasons why a comparison between the two groups is valid.** Quite frankly, Sack sums it all up with his cartoon.

Lacks Ability To Be Reasoned With

Godly Wisdom

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure (undefiled); then it is peace-loving, courteous (considerate, gentle). [It is willing to] yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is wholehearted and straight-forward, impartial and unfeigned (free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity). James 3:17 Amplified

Come Let Us Reason Together

Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18 NKJ

The Bible clearly states that God is our friend and that we can reason with Him. He is your friend. You can reason with Him. Therefore, if you can reason with God, Himself, it makes sense you should be able to reason with your own minister. Right? This critical aspect of Godly Wisdom is defined in James 3:17 as the "ability to be reasoned with." This is where the "rubber-meets-the-road" to use a modern metaphor.

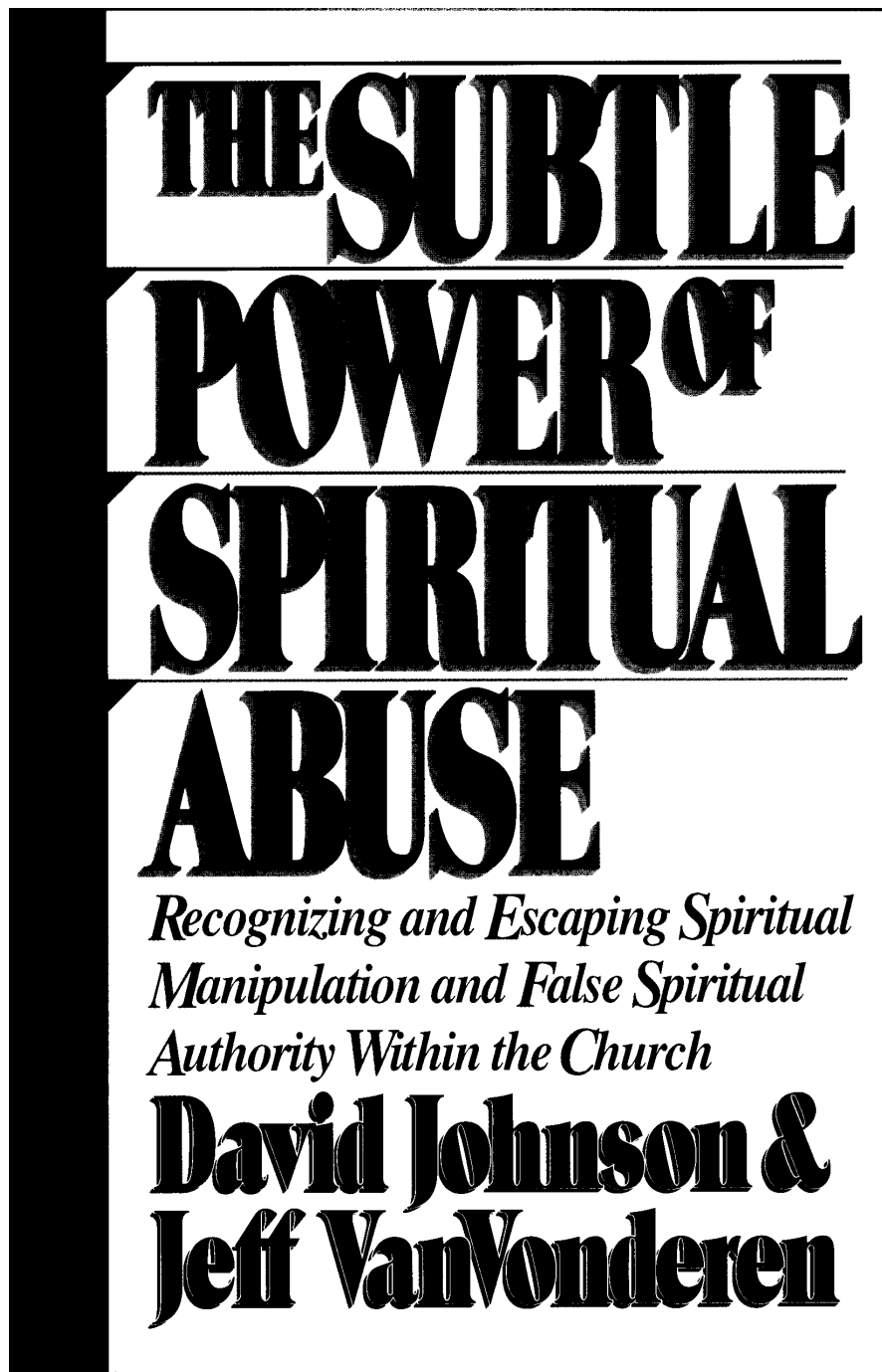
If you can't reason with your minister, he (the minister) does not possess Godly Wisdom. It's that simple. I found this to be the case with Bill Matthews. I found a cult that uses the name of Jesus for personal and family gain. Matthews "uses" his congregation.

Spiritually Abusive Ministry

After I left Bill Matthews' Ministry at Solid Rock Church, I read the book "The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse" by authors David Johnson & Jeff VanVonderen. This is an excellent resource book on how spiritually abusive ministries operate. It describes Bill Matthews' Ministry to a tee and in-depth. From the "false spiritual authority" that Matthews' exerts over his congregation to the "abusive" interactions with the congregation. It informs you on how to deal with these types of ministries. Bill Matthews' Ministry ranges from being a spiritually abusive ministry to being a "self-serving" cult.

Spiritual Abuse & False Spiritual Authority

(Reference Book)



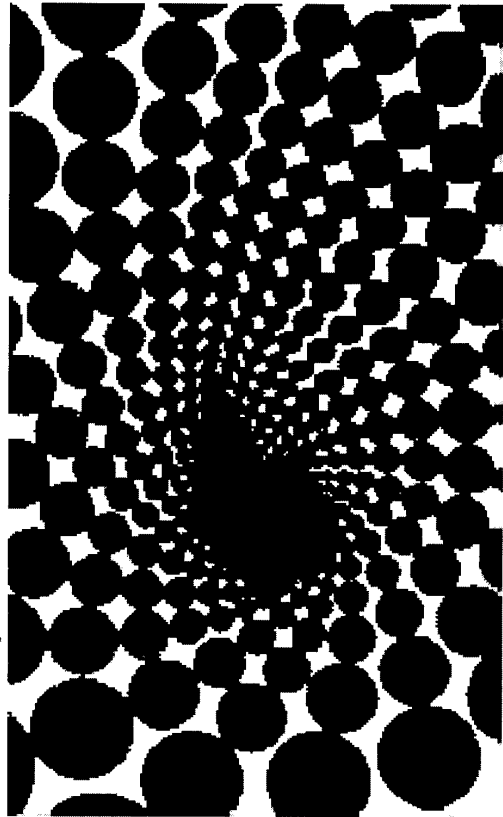
Internet Resource On Cults

<http://www.infoman.demon.co.uk/cicmain.html>

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-
- [What is the Cult Information Centre ?](#)
 - [What does the CIC do?](#)
 - [What is a cult?](#)
 - [Categories of cults](#)
 - [Beware of cult recruiters](#)
 - [Beware of cult manipulation](#)
 - [Be aware of your vulnerability](#)
 - [Be aware of the harmful effects](#)
 - [Mind control techniques](#)
 - [Recommended reading](#)
 - [The 'do's and don'ts'](#)
 - [Sites of interest](#)

Comments or Questions to [Cult Information Centre](#)

(Please note that there is a delay of 2 or 3 weeks when CIC respond by e-mail.

Writing to the address or phoning are viable options.)

Go back to [Main Site Index](#)

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Cult Information Centre's

Definition of a Cult

Every cult can be defined as a group having all of the following 5 characteristics:

1. It uses psycholological coercion to recruit, indoctrinate and retain its members.
2. It forms an elitist totalitarian society.
3. Its founder leader is self-appointed, dogmatic, messianic, not accountable and has charisma.
4. It believes 'the end justifies the means' in order to solicit funds and recruit people.
5. Its wealth does not benefit its members or society.

Comments or Questions to (Cult Information Centre)

The above page located on the Internet at: <http://www.infoman.demon.co.uk/definit.html>

Matthews' 100% Cult Rating

Bill Matthews' Ministry at Solid Rock Church in Elk River, Minnesota exhibits all of the above cult characteristics as defined by the Cult Information Centre.

A photo fueled talk, rejected by astronomers, of an object behind the comet.

Hale-Bopp link may have been tied to rumors on radio, Internet

From News Services

which is carried on more than 300 stations.

The Higher Source group's belief that a UFO is trailing the Hale-Bopp comet may have been inspired by rumors spread over the Internet and late-night talk radio.

In November, amateur astronomer Chuck Shramek of Houston called Art Bell's "Coast to Coast" radio show with astounding news — a photograph he had taken on the night of Nov. 14 showed a mysterious "Saturnlike object" behind Hale-Bopp. He speculated that it was up to four times the size of Earth.

Astronomers subsequently demonstrated that what Shramek had seen was a star distorted by his telescope's optics.

Yet the rumors continued for weeks, fostered by an acrimonious Internet debate and continuous publicity on Bell's program,

Shramek took his photo. They said Shramek didn't see a star because he had incorrectly programmed his computer; then, to make matters worse, his telescope distorted the image.

Shramek did not return calls to his Houston home Thursday, but in an interview with Houston television station KHOU, he said, "I'm just, I'm just in shock."

"To think that I'm somehow linked to it, it's, it's overwhelming," Shramek said. "It's overwhelming that people could be so crazy. Apparently they were."

Shramek said since he put his picture on the Internet, he's been getting hundreds of electronic mails a day with bizarre theories.

Strange and portentous associations with a comet are not new: Virtually every comet ever recorded has been said to influence human events and destinies, usually for the worse.



The comet Hale-Bopp, which the Heaven's Gate Web site called "the marker" we've been waiting for." Associated Press

Comets were believed to have portended the birth and death of Julius Caesar, the fall of Jerusalem, the invasion of Gaul by Attila the Hun.

Sometimes the prophecies were self-fulfilling. Genghis Khan is said to have been so taken by the appearance of Halley's comet in 1222 — he considered it his personal star — that he was inspired to sweep down from Mongolia and invade southeastern

Europe, massacring millions. And in 1066 William the Conqueror, urged on by the visitation of Halley's — "a wonderful sign from heaven" — carried out the Norman Invasion.

In the 20th century, astrophysicists have learned that comets are just exotic members of the solar system, orbiting the sun at so great a distance that their appearance, no matter how rhythmic, comes as a surprise.

Technologically sophisticated yet so gullible

By Ellen Goodman
Boston Globe

BOSTON — The “experts” are parading across my television screen again. A full entourage of authors and researchers and professors are there, following the psychic bread crumbs, the clues that led 39 people from their separate lives to their Rancho Sante Fe deaths.

We are far now along the familiar media route. Last week’s tragedy becomes this week’s analysis and then — as surely as black humor survives horror — next week’s entry in some David Letterman routine.

Surfing across the channels now, I can put together a collage of such experts trying to explain why some three dozen souls would willingly, maybe even eagerly, leave their “containers.”

There is a hapless pursuit of any common thread that brought a former massage therapist, choir leader, postal worker to the conclusion that if they packed their flight bags and drank their potions, they would be lifted to “the kingdom level above human.”

But this time the incomprehensible event has a new name. Someone labels Heaven’s Gate an Internet cult. Someone else calls it a cybercult.

What jars the minds of many people is that the folks in Heaven’s Gate were technologically sophisticated. And yet stunningly gullible. They worked skillfully in a field that we associate with computer science. And

yet believed in science fiction.

Calling themselves Higher Source, they made home pages by day. And read ancient portents from the comets in the night sky. They had skills that outstrip those of us who barely navigate the Internet. But they believed there was a spaceship in Hale-Bopp’s tail.

Millennialism and megabytes? The World Wide Web and unidentified flying objects? It doesn’t compute, many say, as if computing were the ultimate proof of rationality.

It doesn’t compute, they say, to find 39 bodies — pockets filled with quarters and \$5 bills, videotape filled with excited talk of spacecraft — in a lush home crammed with desktop terminals. Compared to this, the Jonestown jungle made perverse horror-tale sense.

Maybe indeed “cybercult” should be an oxymoron. But today, it stands as one more word of proof about how fast and far technology can streak ahead of understanding.

At times like this we are reminded of a vast disconnect between the new tools we create and the old mindsets they may serve. It’s as vast as Heaven’s Gate’s home page that used electronic talent to post the tacky tabloid portraits of an alien creature. As vast as the megabyte transmission of a message, and the gibberish of the message itself.

The Internet is the latest, but hardly the only, example of this gap between high tech and low us. After all, we are the people who made televi-

sion and show sitcoms on it. We split the atom and made a bomb with it. We built cars that can go beyond 120 miles an hour for people who cannot control the wheel over 80. And in Hollywood, the most advanced technology is used to blow up a miniature White House or imitate a volcano.

To see how much faster technology can move than the human mind, all I need to do is look at the cursor on my screen blinking impatiently for the next sentence to form. To see the gap between skill and understanding, you can talk about life with the 13-year-old installing your Windows 95.

So too, the remarkable new turf of the Internet can, as well, be just another place to show people having sex with each other. Cutting-edge software can be used by people recruiting others to an antiscientific creationism. It can hook up Marshall Applewhite to a young mother surfing the new way for an age-old way out.

What strikes me about the Heaven’s Gate members is not that they were so advanced but so far behind, not that they were part of the great new world of computers but that they were lost in the world of people. Cut off from family and reason, the authors of these home pages had already left their earthly home.

With all due respect to those who dub this a cybercult, the connecting thread isn’t in the tools these people used, but those they lacked. In the end, cyberspace was easy. Life was too hard.

Cult Characteristics of Bill Matthews' Ministry

Overview

This section deals with the cult characteristics of Bill Matthews' Ministry in Elk River, Minnesota and his false teachings. Bill Matthews is the Senior Pastor at Solid Rock Church in Elk River, Minnesota. These cult characteristics and false teachings were observed by the writer of this report and others. Collaboration with others have verified the repeated teachings of the messages that are presented in the next few pages. The main focal points of this section are the errant (and subtle) tithe teaching which first occurred on November 20, 1996 and "Bill Matthews' Big Lie To AFCM." A partial transcript of the errant tithe message follows. A copy of the actual audio taped message is also available.

Why are these teachings of Bill Matthews' errant or false? Because they do not line up with the written Word of God. Why is this an important issue? Because Bill Matthews proclaims that he is a minister of the Word. That God's Holy Word rules his ministry. This, however, is not reality. The facts show that Bill Matthews' is running a cult in the name of Jesus for the specific benefit of himself and his family. In the process, he is spiritually abusing the other people of his congregation. His false teachings are driving Christians out of his ministry in search of other places to worship. Those who stay are either misled and lied to, in a state of shock, ignorant of the Word, confused or thoroughly indoctrinated.

Preach The Word!

"Herald *and* preach the Word!" 2 Timothy 4:2

"For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound *and* wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking *and* to foster the errors they hold, And will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths *and* man-made fictions." 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Teaching of Pastor Bill Matthews

Senior Pastor

Solid Rock Church, Elk River, MN 55330

Excerpt from 11/20/96 Recorded Message

Is Pastor Bill Matthews speaking a truth from God's Word? Or, has he perverted it?

This partial transcript begins near the start of side two of Solid Rock's recorded message tape.

"So what God is getting ready to do is take the children of Israel. He's got em on a journey. Not enough, just enough, more than enough. And, what does He tell them in Joshua? Get behind the anointing. Follow the anointing cause you've never gone this way before. You're going into a land with more than enough. And then he tells them—the manna and the quail are going to stop. You're not going to eat that anymore. You're entering into the land of more than enough now. But, now you have to eat of the fruit of that land. In other words. Now you're going to live by a different set of principles, rules and guidelines.

So, here's what I see happening in the body of Christ. I believe this is what the Lord was showing me in Jerusalem. In the body of Christ, this church in particular; but, I believe the body of Christ as a whole. I taught you on tithing, tithing, tithing, tithing, tithing, tithing, tithing.

Now, if you tithe and that's all you do is tithe—you will never have the abundant lifestyle that God wants you to have in being in the land of more than enough.

Because the tithe is not yours. It's not yours! It's God's already. It's already His! So you're not giving Him anything except you're being a good steward of what He's given you.

So you can't, you can't give the tithe and say now: 'God bless me.'

Because I've given You this tithe and it's been such a sacrifice to me to give it. You can't do that because it's not yours anyway.

See, Jim could come up to me and say let me see your sport coat for a minute or this tie. You know, let me see that tie. Take the tie off. Let me see the tie. Then I could hand him the tie and he could look at it like this. Then he could go over to, um -- our brother and say, here, have this tie. Well, it wasn't his tie to give. Wasn't his tie. It was my tie. If I want to give my tie I can. But, it's not right for him to give my tie.

That's what happens when you touch the tithe. It's not yours. It's not yours! You're taking something that's not yours and doing something with it that doesn't belong to you.

And, you can never enter into the land of abundance by just paying your tithe.

People say its not New Testament. What you don't understand is the New Testament. Most of the, most of the books were written by Jews -- they already tithed. They already tithed! It's a given issue. It's not even open for debate. If you're a Jew that takes care of the religious aspects of Judaism, you tithed. So, what God is talking about here when He goes to his people in Mark chapter 4 and starts to talk to them about—is sowing.

Why? Because He wants them to enter into the land of more than enough. Or the land of abundance. Sowing. Sowing! Now -- So we teached on tithing for a long time and finally God says: 'Now—they need to graduate. You need to go into sowing. They need to understand sowing.' Because --

It is what is going to get them into the land of abundance. Where you can have mega harvest. Some 30, some 60, some 100. God's perfect will for you is to have a 100 fold harvest.

That's where the church is at. But, see, we as a church; you as a congregation; me as a pastor. We've graduated beyond the tithing only concept into sowing.

The church has to get into mega harvest increase if we're going to be financially equipped to bring back the last move of the Holy Ghost.

The end time harvest. It's harvest time. It takes much more dollars at harvest time than it does at planting time. The season in God is harvest season.

You will completely miss what God has for you if you don't enter into mega harvest increase in your finances. You'll miss it. You'll miss what God has predestined for you if you don't get into mega harvest. Now, you can't make it happen except by sowing. That's the only way that God has provided for us to have mega harvest increase is sowing."

This banquet. We had a banquet last year. We had a banquet. We didn't have a banquet last year, but we had an offering last year. We had a banquet in April. We're having another banquet right now. What God is doing. What God is doing is He's stretching you, He's stretching me, He's stretching you. I'll be honest with you; I almost canceled this banquet. We had obstacle after obstacle after obstacle.

Uh, I think Dawn was the one that got up and said it was hard to go to Israel. It's hard. Well, it is hard. If it was easy, everybody would do it. If it was easy, everybody do it. They don't do it. If it was easy, everybody would have mega harvest increase. But there's conditions we have to meet. There's things we have to do. We have to abide by God's principles and laws and follow them. And follow them closely because God is a God of order. So we have to know them. And, the Bible says in Mark chapter 4: 'Unto us is given the right to understand or know these parables.' And if we can understand and know this parable, we can know all parables. And we can understand the kingdom.

For us, those who are in the inner circle. We talked about all those things when He talked about sowing. So this banquet in itself is another step. Another step.”

The above excerpt is part of a message given by Senior Pastor Bill Matthews of Solid Rock Church two days prior to a special banquet designed to raise \$100,000. The message begins on the second side of the tape after the story about the Jerusalem jeweler. Does Pastor Bill Matthews accurately reflect the truth of the Word of God concerning tithing and abundance? Or, has he perverted God’s tithe for fund raising purposes? Can his teachings above be reconciled with Malachi 3:10?

Matthews' Subtly Perverts Malachi 3:10



Pastors Bill & Mary
Matthews

1997

The year of the open heaven, the year of fulfilled promises. The Holy Spirit has strongly directed us to give people another opportunity at the beginning of this year to plant largely. In Malachi 3:10 God said to prove Him by your giving if He will not open you the windows of heaven. Many of you have made extravagant giving a lifestyle and have seen this promise come to pass in ways you could not have imagined. God's Word is true! He challenges us to prove Him, to keep increasing in our faith and watch God's delight at our trust in Him. God has given us some exciting direction as to where we will sow the first fruits of this offering. Ask God what your part should be and step out in faith further than you have before. Come to the Windows of Heaven Banquet and be a part of a miracle as God puts the anointing of increase on leadership to distribute the gifts to meet the needs of many. See you there!

Solid Rock Church

11800 196th Avenue NW
Elk River, MN 55330
612-441-2816



Today's Date _____

(Please print legibly.)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tithe \$ _____

Offering \$ _____

Missions \$ _____

Radio Ministry \$ _____

_____ \$ _____

(Other)

TOTAL: \$ _____

Matthews Vs God's Word

Bill Matthews	God's Word
Now, if you tithe and that's all you do is tithe—you will never have the abundant lifestyle that God wants you to have . . .	<p>“. . . you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things.” Malachi 3:10 Good News Bible</p> <p>“[God will] pour you out such a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Malachi 3:10 Amplified</p>
So you can't give the tithe and say now: God bless me.	Put Me to the test . . . Malachi 3:10
The only way for you to get into abundance is by sowing!	Malachi 3:10 All versions of the Bible
The people are robbing God with their offerings in addition to their tithes. Malachi 3:8 is used as a reference verse for this teaching.	“When you take from the Israelites the tithe which I have give you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the Lord, even a tenth of the tithe [paid by the people].” Numbers 18:26 The offering spoken of in Malachi 3:8 was the tithe from the Levites <u>not</u> something from the people in addition to their tithe.
About 70-90% of all pulpit messages are focused on the giving of tithes and offerings to the exclusion of all else.	<p>“you have neglected the weightier matters of . . . justice and mercy and faith.” Matthew 23:23</p> <p>“do not exalt yourself regarding the giving of tithes” Luke 18:14</p>
Giving in “every” offering is exhorted as “you don't know what offering God will bless.” It is not unusual to see 3-4 offerings taken every Sunday. God is treated by the ministry as some kind of lottery operation.	<p>“Those who desire to become rich fall into temptation and a snare . . .” 2 Timothy 6:9</p> <p>“The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.” 1 Samuel 2:7</p>
Members are exhorted to be “in church” whenever the church is open. Programming is arranged so that almost every single night of the week -- the church is open. Keeping the children in the church until 11p.m. through 1 a.m. is very common and encouraged. The church is promoted as “the family.” People are encouraged to bring their own family members in (if possible) but are told they “need” to come themselves in any case.	1 Timothy 5:8 states: “If anyone fails to provide for his relatives, and especially for those of his own family, he has disowned the faith [by failing to accompany it with fruits] and is worse than an unbeliever (infidel) [who performs his obligation in these matters].” This provision is more that just mere physical sustenance.

<p>Matthews often compares his ministry to that of Jesus' and cites himself as the shepherd (I.E.—doing the shepherd's work for Jesus). Matthews likes to use the analogy of fleecing the sheep (his congregation). The metaphor is used to explain why the congregation needs to give more money to his ministry.</p>	<p>John 10:16 “. . . they will listen to My voice and heed My call, and there will be [they will become] one flock under one Shepherd.”</p> <p>The Shepherd referred to above is Jesus. It is not Bill Matthews as he would have his congregation believe.</p>
<p>Matthews taught his congregation to “not talk” to those that have left his church.</p> <p>A can't talk rule.</p>	<p>“Then those who feared the Lord talked often one to another; and the Lord listened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who revered and worshipfully feared the Lord and who thought on His name.” Malachi 3:16 “Test all things; hold fast what is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:21</p>
<p>Matthews taught his congregation to “not pray” inside the sanctuary for others. In fact, he stated: “If you want to pray for someone, get your own ministry.” He stated that he was the only one “anointed” to pray for someone inside the sanctuary. As an usher, I was instructed to stop anyone I saw in the sanctuary that was praying for someone else.</p>	<p>“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.” Hebrews 13:9</p> <p>James 5:16 “Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].”</p>
<p>Matthews paid poverty wages to his staff members. One couple could not afford to buy groceries or wash clothes. Instead, they lived off of the food shelf. The music minister was underpaid and had difficulty affording even the most basic items in life such as food and gas for his car. When Matthews fired him because of “so-called” pride, he refused to pay him his last weeks wages because he “talked” to some people. Matthews also withdrew the electric deposit on his apartment. The utilities almost shut down his electricity. Other staff cannot afford apartments and live in rooms provided by others. Sacrifice is “sold” as a necessity for God. At the same time, Matthews drives around in a expensive new car. Staff members are conveniently discarded and replaced with family members.</p>	<p>“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his [upper] chambers by injustice, who uses his neighbor's service without wages and does not give him his pay [for his work].” Jeremiah 22:13</p> <p>“I will be a swift witness against those who oppress the hireling in his wages. . .” Malachi 3:5</p> <p>“[But] look! [Here are] the wages that you have withheld by fraud from the laborers who have reaped your fields, crying out [for vengeance]; and the cries of the harvesters have come to the ears of the Lord of hosts.” James 5:4</p>


<p>People who confront Matthews with his false teachings are told: “You have a problem with spiritual authority. You need to repent and pray about it.” If the person fails to immediately back down or accept Matthews’ arguments or statements, they are told: “You don’t have the spiritual authority to rebuke me.”</p>	<p>“If your brother sins (misses the mark), solemnly tell him so and reprove him, and if he repents (feels sorry for having sinned), forgive him.” Luke 17:3</p> <p>“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16</p> <p>“Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them].” Revelation 3:19</p>
<p>A subtle example of Matthews changing God’s Word is shown on page 23 of this report where Matthews claims that in Malachi 3:10 God says: “to prove Him by your giving.” Then, he goes on to talk about “extravagant giving” and previously “to plant largely.” This is not what Malachi 3:10 says! Matthews has twisted God’s Word into his own confusing message. He has blended his sowing theology onto God’s tithing message to create a new “giving” Malachi 3:10 verse.</p>	<p>“For He [Who is the source of their prophesying] is not a God of confusion and disorder but of peace and order. As [is the practice] in all the churches of the saints (God’s people).” 1 Corinthians 14:33</p> <p>This is one example of many where Matthews has taught on opposite sides of a message. The dialogue on page 23 is seemingly contradictory to his “can’t get blessed by tithing message.”</p>
<p>The entire voting congregation was lied to by Bill Matthews on many occasions. The congregation voted on 9/12/96 to disaffiliate with the Assembly of God ministries and to immediately affiliate with the AFCM group of which Living Word in Minneapolis is associated with. As in a switch of affiliations! <u>The big lie</u> is that the congregation was told on several occasions that we were affiliated with AFCM. However, Bill Matthews disaffiliated Solid Rock Church with both the Assemblies of God Ministries and the AFCM Ministries. The ministry of Bill Matthews is therefore not accountable to others. The congregation (including myself) along with the Assembly of God Ministries and the AFCM Ministries were duped by the lies of Bill Matthews.</p>	<p>“But [you say] if through my falsehood God’s integrity is magnified and advertised and abounds to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner? And why should we not do evil that good may come?—as some slanderously charge us with teaching. Such [false teaching] is justly condemned by them.” Romans 3:7-8</p>

Bill Matthews' Big Lie To AFCM

CORPORATE RESOLUTION

At a meeting of SOLID ROCK CHURCH, INC. Elk River, Minnesota, held on November 7, 1996, a motion was made and carried that SOLID ROCK CHURCH, INC. disaffiliate from ASSOCIATION OF FAITH CHURCHES AND MINISTERS, INC. (AFCM).

Date 11/7/96


President (Pastor)

It's A Big Lie - It's That Simple!

On 11/7/96, before going to Israel, (less than 60 days after the church voted to affiliate with the AFCM on 9/12/96), Bill Matthews' withdrew Solid Rock Church from its AFCM affiliation. The resolution he sent the AFCM is a big lie. It's that simple. Ministers are not suppose to lie. There was no notice of a 11/7/96 meeting, no church meeting and certainly no vote. At least not of the members of the congregation as required by Minnesota State Law and church By-Laws. Did Bill meet Mary in the kitchen and have this vote? Bill Matthews has, by cult techniques and deception, made a big power grab for all of Solid Rock's property. It's not yours Bill. It belongs to God. Bill has first stolen it away from the Assembly of God Ministry. Now, he seeks to steal it away from the members of the congregation. Matthews has committed fraud against the AG, AFCM and the congregation. It's time that Bill Matthews, his family and staff left Solid Rock. It's time that Solid Rock Church be turned over to Living Word & AFCM for a reorganization. Bill lies and manipulates. This is not of God. Bill and Mary Matthews have no authority to disaffiliate with the AFCM on their own accord. If they did, the church would not have taken two votes over the course of a full year to disaffilitate with the Assembly of God Ministry and to affiliate with the AFCM. Bill, you are not the firm foundation, it is still God's Word. This withdrawal from the AFCM constitutes a big deception and there are simply no excuses!

AFCM Verification

Request For AFCM Affiliation Verification

TO: Jim Caseman Ministries & AFCM, Tulsa, Oklahoma

FROM: Edward G. Palmer, Elk River, MN 55330
VIA Facsimile Transmission

Please verify for me whether the following ministry is affiliated with AFCM as of today's date, April 8, 1997:

**Bill & Mary Matthews
Solid Rock Church
11800 196th Avenue NW
Elk River, MN 55330**

☐ Solid Rock Church is an AFCM church.

☒ Solid Rock Church is not an AFCM church.

Date of last known AFCM affiliation Nov. 11, 1996

Comments:

Please see following resolution

Verified By: [Signature] **AFCM Ministries**

Thank you for your assistance.

Date of Verification 4-8-97

In Christ Jesus,

Edward G. Palmer

Edward G. Palmer

Ministry Confrontation

Overview

The confrontation with Bill Matthews' Ministry was focused on his errant tithe teaching. Matthews would not discuss the Bible verses that contradicted his false teachings. The confrontation did not go into the lies about the AFCM affiliation nor the cult characteristics or the "spiritually abusive" nature of his ministry.

It should be firmly understood that the author of this report followed a distinct progression in attempting to deal with Bill Matthews. First, the author confronted Bill Matthews on the night of his perverted teaching in front of one of his head ushers immediately following the service. Second, the author attempted to clear the matter up through a meeting with assistant pastor Bill King. Third, the author attempted to clear the matter up with a face to face meeting with Matthews.

The author was unable to resolve any issues with this ministry. Upon further investigation, research and study, the author has concluded that Bill Matthews' Ministry in Elk River, Minnesota is indeed a cult that is designed to serve the needs of Matthews and his family. Further, it is a spiritually abusive ministry that is involved in deception and fraud.

Most members of the congregation that remain would feel quite deceived if they had any knowledge of the fact that Matthews has, without their approval, disaffiliated Solid Rock Church from the AFCM Ministries. Bill Matthews, his staff and his family have no authority to disaffiliate Solid Rock Church from the AFCM Ministries without holding a meeting of the members of the congregation and voting on the issue. In the process of this and other lies, Bill Matthews has wrought deception upon his congregation, the Assembly of God Ministries of Minnesota and the AFCM Ministries.

Due to its spiritual and Biblical content, some of the material presented throughout this report may be somewhat difficult to understand for those people who lack the prerequisite knowledge of the Bible.

However, everyone understands that ministers are not suppose to lie to their congregations. Ministers are not suppose to commit fraud to usurp the property and rights from their congregation for personal or family gain. Ministers should understand that it all belongs to God.

December 16, 1996 Meeting

A meeting was held on December 16, 1996 with Assistant Pastor Bill King of Solid Rock Church at my office in Otsego. The purpose of the meeting was to help clear up any misunderstanding that I may have had about the November 20th perverted teaching of Pastor Matthews. The meeting lasted two and one half hours. Pastor King was unable to offer any Biblical references that would offset the Bible references I had identified.

December 23, 1996 Meeting

A meeting was held on December 23, 1996 with Senior Pastor Bill Matthews of Solid Rock Church and Kyle Smith, business manager, at Solid Rock Church. The meeting was held in Pastor Matthews' office. The purpose of the meeting was to help clear up any misunderstanding that I may have had about the November 20th perverted teaching of Pastor Matthews. The meeting lasted about forty five minutes. Pastor Matthews would not discuss any Biblical references that I came with. Instead, he started to accuse me of several things that were all untrue. In the end, he finished his part of the conversation by stating I had no spiritual authority to rebuke with him. See "Letter To Editor" for additional commentary on the meeting.

The following "MEMO" (pages 32-37) was given to Pastor Matthews and Kyle Smith for their review on December 23, 1996. No changes were made by Bill Matthews and his false teachings continue to this date.

MEMO

TO: SRC Ministry
FROM: GOD's Holy Word
SUBJ: Critique And Wake-Up Call!
DATE: 12/23/96

Assumptions

1. SRC is a "Word-of-Faith" Church where God's Holy Word rules without compromise.
2. SRC Senior Pastor possesses "Godly Wisdom" which is open to reason per James 3:17.
3. SRC Senior Pastor has a pure heart for God with no ulterior personal or family motives.
4. SRC Ministry is capable of repentance and of correcting an errant course.

Godly Wisdom

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure (undefiled); then it is peace-loving, courteous (considerate, gentle). [It is willing to] yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is wholehearted and straight-forward, impartial and unfeigned (free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity). James 3:17 Amplified

Biblical Definitions

Abundance means having a "plentiful supply."

Pervert means "to cause to turn away from that which is good, true, or morally right."

Observation

The tithe teaching is clearly not in line with the Word of God. The resultant SRC ministry doctrine has become extremely strange, unsound, non-Biblical and worldly to the eyes of a Bible-reading, Bible-believing, spirit-filled body of believers! As a direct result, the very people whom the ministry is trying to attract and retain are leaving because the Word of God is being perverted.

Some Instructions

“Test all things; hold fast what is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJ

“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.” Hebrews 13:9 NKJ

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers” II Timothy 4:3 NKJ

“Not many [of you] should become teachers (self-constituted censors and reprovers of others), my brethren, for you know that we [teachers] will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity [than other people; thus we assume the greater accountability and the more condemnation]. James 3:1 Amplified

“But the tithes of the Israelites, which they present as an offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit; therefore I have said to them, Among the Israelites they shall have no inheritance. [They have homes and cities and pasturage to use but not to possess as their personal inheritance.] Numbers 18: 24 Amplified

“When you take from the Israelites the tithe which I have give you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the Lord, even a tenth of the tithe [paid by the people].” Numbers 18:26

Robbing God in Malachi 3:8 (Who’s Tithe Vs Who’s Offering?)

In Numbers 18, God provides clear instructions on the tithe and offering that is spoken of in Malachi 3:8 on how the people rob God. The people rob God with their tithes and offerings!

A) The **“tithe”** in Malachi 3:8 is the tenth paid by the people. Numbers 18:24

B) The **“offering”** in Malachi 3:8 is the tenth paid by the Levites. Numbers 18:26

11/20/96 Errant Tithe Teaching

On the evening of 11/20/96, Pastors Matthews taught: “Tithing will not bring abundance. You have to give offerings as well if you want abundance. It is the offerings that give you 30-60-100 fold increase.” Question: Is this a true teaching on the tithe from the Word of God?

God’s Word in Malachi 3:10

Good News Bible

“Put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and **pour out on you in abundance** all kinds of good things.”

The Everyday Bible

“I will open the windows of heaven for your and pour out **all the blessings you need.**”

The Amplified Bible

“and prove Me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out **such a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.**”

St. Joseph New American Bible

“**open for you the floodgates** of heaven, to pour down **blessing upon you without measure?**”

New King James

“**such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.**”

King James

“**there shall not be room enough to receive it.**”

New International

“so much blessing that **you will not have room enough for it.**”

Living Bible

“**a blessing so great** you won’t have room enough to take it in.”

Revised Standard

“**pour down** for you an **overflowing blessing.**”

God's Word & Discussion

1. Abundance comes from tithing according to God's Word! (from prior discussion).
2. "you have neglected the weightier matters of . . . justice and mercy and faith." Matt 23:23
3. "what does . . . God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God . . ." Deut. 10:12
4. "And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe . . ." Why? "That you may learn to fear the Lord your God always." Deut 14:23 If SRC really understood God's tithe, it could teach on this part of God's Holy Word.
5. The section of Malachi 3:8 where God states that the people of Israel have robbed Him with their tithes and offerings goes back to Numbers 18 where God gives the people His instructions. The "tithe" pertains to the people giving 10% to the Levites. The "offering" pertains to the 10% the Levites gave Aaron (their heave offering).
6. At Solid Rock, God's Word on the tithe has been perverted to give the impression that a tithe is not "good enough" for abundance. Was it not God who said to test Him? To prove Him?
7. The ministry has further perverted the "offering" teaching in Malachi 3:8 to give the distinct impression that the people rob God by not giving offerings in addition to their tithe. When this part of God's Word really pertains to the Levites giving their (10%) heave offering.
8. The ministry either doesn't understand God's tithe or has ulterior fund raising motives. Either way, the perverted teaching does not stand up with the very people that the ministry is trying to attract and retain. That is: Bible-believing and Bible-reading spirit-filled Christians. Sooner or later, the Word will conflict directly with the SRC tithe teaching. And, the Word will always win. This is one of the main reasons people are constantly leaving SRC.
9. Under the Grace of our Lord Jesus, it is arguable that the tithe is not even required since it represents a "works" theology which is not of "grace." Especially as the tithe is currently taught by SRC. However, God states in Deut. that the tithe is "to fear Him." In other words, the main purpose of the tithe is to bring ourselves into fellowship and a covenant relationship with Him. The contrast of our love of God generating our tithe to Him Vs a "fear of robbing" God is a real dichotomy. The latter being the sole emphasis at Solid Rock Ministry.
10. The tithe is further perverted with a teaching of "tithing off the gross" when God's Word clearly states "to tithe off the increase." (Deut 14:22) In short, the entire tithe teaching at SRC has become grossly perverted and not true to what the Word of God explicitly states about tithing. Even the teaching that the tithe is not ours to give. If it isn't ours to give, why does God ask us to give it? The Word is being ignored in favor of some cute and simple religious dogma. Yes, the Word says the tithe belongs to God. But, we are suppose to give it to Him out of our fear and reverence for Him. At least from an old testament perspective.
11. The tithe has become a focal point of SRC Ministry and weightier matters are forgotten.

God Says If The Tithe Is Understood To Teach On These Four Verses!

“tithe all the increase of your grain” Deut 14:22

“do not eat any of the tithes while mourning” Deut. 26:14

“you shall eat the tithe before the Lord, and you shall rejoice” Deut 14:26

“do not exalt yourself regarding the giving of the tithes” Luke 18:14

God’s Word on Riches

“The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.” Prov 10:22 NKJ

“The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.” I Samuel 2:7 NKJ

“He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” Prov 10:4

“Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven.” Matthews 6:19

“Where your treasure is, there your heart is . . .” Matthews 6:21

“Hard for a rich man to enter heaven . . .” Matthew 19:23

“Woe to the rich . . .” Luke 6:24

“Those who desire to become rich fall into temptation and a snare. . .” 2 Tim 6:9

Some Other Examples Of Perverted Teachings

1. Teaching the congregation: “God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that he shall reap.” Then, in the following week or month, teaching: “We are sowing into the Dufresne ministry and we will reap healing.” “We are sowing into Summeral ministry and will reap back provision.” Then, in a subsequent teaching, back to “To get more buses, we need to sow buses.” ?Strange
2. Recent analogy of SRC ministry to Jesus’ ministry and suggesting that apart from (SRC) the congregation could do nothing. ?Strange
3. Instructing the ushers to stop anyone within the sanctuary who is praying for someone else. However, the Word tells us that we are to “pray for one another.” ?Strange
4. Amplifying this don’t pray instruction by telling people to get their own ministry if they want to pray for someone in the congregation. ?Strange
5. Can’t give offerings unless one has tithed. ?Strange (What about the person with no income?)
6. Don’t talk to others who have left the church. Ostracizing people. ?Strange
7. Don’t divide tithes and then teaching how the church divides its tithe. ?Strange
8. Teaching that everyone belongs in the church whenever the doors are open. ?Strange. Are we all Levites? Are we all (everyone in congregation) disciples? Are we all full time ministry?
9. Teaching that children belong in church even at midnight instead of getting the rest they need for school the next day. How is this supported in God’s Word? If the family structure is weakened with chaos in the family’s life, how is God exalted? ?Strange
10. Teaching that our services have to constantly change when the Word of God states that He does not change. God is not the author of confusion! So, why is there so much confusion at Solid Rock Ministry? ?Strange
11. . . . X (Yes, there are others.)

Becoming More Like Jesus

Includes finding solitude, rest and peace. Not necessarily running to the church every night!

Wake-Up: God Calls SRC Back to HIS Word!

Bill Matthews' Tactics

1. **Delaying tactic.** I told Pastor Matthews immediately on the night of 11/20/96 in front of Wes King that what he had just taught did not square with Malachi 3 in God's Word. Then, immediately the next morning, I requested a meeting with Pastor Matthews. This request was basically ignored. When we first met, Mr. Matthews stated that he had never received the request which was left on Crystal's voice mail. I am not so sure that Crystal would necessarily back up Mr. Matthews' statement. It didn't matter.
2. **Waiting tactic.** Despite being available, Mr. Matthews proceeded on other business for about 15 minutes. It was he who set the 1:00 time request for the meeting (as being better for him). I was left alone in his office for a minimum of 5 minutes and had to wait at least 10 minutes prior to that time.
3. **Attempt to dump Kyle.** Mr. Matthews stated that Pastor King should be in the meeting (since I stated that I wanted a witness) and not Kyle Smith. Kyle went to get Pastor King but he could not find Pastor King. So Kyle sat down for the discussion.
4. **Attempt to intimidate.** Mr. Matthews made several attempts to intimidate and interrupt me. In order to circumvent to nature of the conversation.
5. **Attempt to control meeting.** Mr. Matthews proceeded immediately to try and control the meeting by immediately suggesting (before I could even get started) that I did not support Solid Rock Church.
6. **Attempt to say I didn't support SRC.** Since I had not attended church in recent weeks, Mr. Matthews suggested that this in itself was prima facie proof of my lack of support for Solid Rock. For example, it was clear from his attitude that he was not interested in listening to me because I didn't support his ministry. I restated my support and concern for SRC and that it was my concern for the ministry that was the main reason for the meeting request.
7. **Denial of what he said.** Mr. Matthews denied what he said about tithing on the night of 11/20/96. I didn't buy it since I was there when it happened and immediately provided him feedback on his errant teaching in front of Wes King.
8. **Qualification of what he said.** When I would not accept his assertion that he didn't say "tithing would not lead to abundance," Mr. Matthews proceeded to "qualify" what he 'really' said. He said he was 'really' talking about "extreme abundance." I still didn't buy this statement either. I acknowledged that his words should be on tape.
9. **Denied definition of abundance.** Mr. Matthews refused to readily accept Guideposts' Concordance's definition of abundance as "plentiful supply." He stated: "That certainly could be one meaning of abundance, but that there were certainly many others."

10. **Attempt to qualify abundance.** See notes above. A definite attempt was made to derail the conversation by altering the base assumptions. Such as the definition of abundance provided by a concordance.

11. **Constant Interruptions & attempts to change topic.** I could not proceed with any further discussion from the notes I brought for Mr. Matthews because he refused to allow me to talk about God's Word as HE had shown me. It was at the definition of pervert that Mr. Matthews basically stopped me from any further conversation.

12. **Attempt to discredit my tithe dialogue.** Mr. Matthews stated unequivocally that we have had several "sparks" over the tithe issue in the past. I immediately denied even having as much as a single conversation with him about the tithe. By now, I think Mr. Matthews felt he had sufficient control of the meeting.

At this point in the conversation, I told him that I could not cover what God wanted me to say unless he allowed me to continue. He wouldn't. He had no interest in hearing any further details. He then proceeded to . . .

13. **Told me that I had no spiritual authority to rebuke him.** This was when the magic light from God went off. It was readily apparent that Mr. Matthews was NOT operating in Godly Wisdom. God's Word had made it very clear to me that Mr. Matthews was out some place that God did not want him to be. He was not with GOD!

All of the above conversation and tactics occurred before I could even get to the second page (page 2 of 6) of my materials that were prepared with God's help. Materials that took several days to pull together.

Mr. Matthews would not discuss the word of God as it pertained to his pulpit teaching. He simply was not open to any reason or dialogue. Isn't it an irony. God says in Isaiah 1:18 to "come and reason with Me." I can reason with God, but I can't with Mr. Matthews? Has Mr. Matthews placed himself above God? And, in James 3:17 Amplified, Godly Wisdom includes the ability to be reasoned with. Since there was no reasoning with Mr. Matthews, it was DUH! There is no Godly Wisdom! Since Worldly Wisdom "perverts" the Word of God according to the Concordance reference, it was another DUH! It is obvious Mr. Matthews is operating in worldly wisdom.

I thanked Mr. Matthews for the meeting and told him that I had learned all that I needed to know. Further, I stated that "I would not be coming back to Solid Rock Church." I then gave him a full copy of the materials for his review. I noticed that he quickly concealed the materials which prompted me to give Kyle the other copy I had. I don't think Pastor Matthews liked the fact that Kyle was involved or that Kyle had a copy.

Notice Of Withdrawal Of Membership

**TO: Pastor Matthews
Solid Rock Church
Elk River, MN 55330
VIA Facsimile**

**FROM: Ed Palmer
SUBJ: Withdrawal of Membership
DATE: 12/23/96**

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you this afternoon. I was able to find out what God wanted me to know. Unfortunately, and because of the apparent inability to reason with or dialog with you, I will no longer be attending Solid Rock Church. Therefore, please remove my name from the membership list effective immediately. I will be keeping you and Solid Rock Church in my prayers and trust that God will have His way with your ministry. One way or another. Take heed to His Word. To His Wake-Up call for your ministry!

In Christ Jesus,

Edward G. Palmer

Godly Wisdom

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure (undefiled); then it is peace-loving, courteous (considerate, gentle). [It is willing to] yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is wholehearted and straight-forward, impartial and unfeigned (free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity). James 3:17 Amplified

Come Let Us Reason Together

Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18 NKJ

Letter To Editor

Elk River Star News

The following letter was given to Elk River Star News on February 27, 1997.

Godly Wisdom, Spiritual Abuse or Cult?

Ed Palmer, Otsego

Last November 20th, a spiritual sledge hammer hit me hard “upside-the-head.” Stunned is a word I could use. I could also state that I was totally flabbergasted and even dismayed. It was the second time in the last 24 years while attending a church in Elk River. It involved a pastor perverting the Word of God. Pervert means “to cause to turn away from that which is good, true, or morally right.” In more simple language, it means twisting what the Bible (God) says about a given subject. For those people or churches who do not consider the Bible to be the “inspired Word of God” -- one might ask: ‘So what?’ To others, myself included, who take the Bible in more literal terms -- it is quite a different matter. Something perverse is going on in the spiritual community right here in Elk River. Everyone should be concerned. Is it Godly Wisdom, spiritual abuse or is it indeed a cult as many have rumored? I am writing to warn those people who may find themselves more vulnerable to a spiritually abusive or cult environment because of a deeper level of faith. Or, their personal or family’s search for spiritual answers.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” [2 Timothy 3:16 NKJ] Again, while some do not believe this, I and others do. What makes November 20, 1996 an infamous day in my life is that the very pastor who perverted the Word of God resides at a church where he preaches steadily that “the Bible rules” all of his ministry’s policies. Further, the very message he taught was tantamount to his throwing the Bible out-the-window since the foundational scriptures were taught for months if not years prior to this Wednesday evening service. And, his message was not just perverted--it was opposite of what God’s Word says. So what gives? Simple error, hypocrisy, something non-biblical or some other agenda? Yes, it certainly involved money!

The foundational scripture taught from was Malachi 3:10 which will be immediately familiar to a lot of people. “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.” [NKJ] The Good News Bible even refers to “such blessing” as “abundance.” Indeed, the Biblical definition of abundance according to Guideposts’ Concordance is “plentiful supply.” To put it plainly, this pastor taught for months and years to tithe in order to get into “God’s abundance.”

This night, however, the pastor's familiar Bible message started to take on a different and even opposite meaning to that contained in the Holy Bible. It became perverted. The pastor said: "Now, if you tithe and that's all you do is tithe—you will never have the abundant lifestyle that God wants you to have . . . And, you can never enter into the land of abundance by just paying your tithe. . . ." Going on further, the pastor stated: "You will completely miss what God has for you . . . in your finances. You'll miss it. You'll miss what God has predestined for you . . . Now, you can't make it happen except by sowing. That's the only way that God has provided for us to have mega harvest increase is sowing."

The essence of the pastor's message turned out to be that the people of the congregation (not all I presume) were robbing God not only with their tithes but also with their insufficient offerings (those, he suggested, are required of the people in addition to their tithe--for abundance). The message was clear. The people were not giving enough money to the church in terms of both their tithes and their offerings (giving over and above the tithe). Malachi 3:8 was used to teach the people how they were robbing God with their offerings (the lack of or insufficient dollar amount of that which is over and above the required tithe). However, in Malachi 3:8, "offering" is a reference to the Levite's or priest's tithe as instructed by God in Numbers 18:26 [The International Bible Commentary - F. F. Bruce]. The timing of this particular message was just two days prior to a special offering banquet in which the pastor hoped to raised \$100,000.

Immediately (after the service), I informed the pastor in front of one of his head ushers that the message he had just taught the people did not square with what the Holy Bible said in Malachi. Why does all this matter? Because the Bible is foundational to the reason many Christians attend this particular ministry (church). If a ministry states that the Bible is its foundation and then proceeds to pervert the Word of God for some self serving purpose -- then a lot of eyebrows should start to raise -- not just mine! I stopped attending this church until I could get some answers from the pastor. It took over four weeks to get a meeting which was held on DEC 23rd.

I had informed the assistant pastor that the senior pastor was perverting God's Word. That I had no intention of returning unless I could talk, in person, with him. I wanted an explanation of what he had taught. So, here is the scenario. A member of the congregation thinks you (the pastor) are perverting the Word of God. A very serious accusation for a "Bible-based" ministry whose very foundation has been proclaimed repeatedly to be the "Word of God." Most pastors would be very concerned under these circumstances. They would want to clear up any misunderstanding immediately. Wouldn't you? Well, not this particular pastor.

As preparation, I put all the appropriate Bible references for my concerns in a small report. God had showed me specific verses that contradicted what the pastor taught. He also showed me what Godly Wisdom is. It is defined in James 3:17. The Amplified Bible reads: “But the wisdom from above is first of all pure (undefiled); then it is peace-loving, courteous (considerate, gentle). [It is willing to] yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is wholehearted and straight-forward, impartial and unfeigned (free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity).”

The operative words in James 3:17 are “willing to yield to reason.” In Isaiah 1:18, God says: “Come now, and let us reason together.” Did you realize you can approach God as a friend, even as Abraham and Moses did, and actually reason with Him? I.E.—Read Genesis 18:23-33 for Abraham’s dialogue with God. It’s awesome! So, if you can reason with God Almighty, Himself -- it certainly makes sense that you should be able to reason with your pastor. Right?

Before the meeting began, I asked the church business manager if he could sit in on the meeting. I wanted a witness to the impending conversation. This irritated the pastor a little. After a bit of waiting and trying to get the assistant pastor to replace the (pastor’s son-in-law) business manager -- the meeting began with myself, the pastor and the business manager. Before I could get anything significant out of my mouth, the pastor accused me of not supporting his church. I stated this was not true. I was immediately interrupted again with the accusation that we had “sparks” on the issue of tithing several times before. I stated this wasn’t true and that we hadn’t even had any conversations about the tithe. The pastor then “retracted” his statement which was a little weird. It was weird in the sense that first he accused of something that was not true. Then, when it wouldn’t stick to me, it was “retracted.” I started to wonder; what would be next?

The meeting started to degenerate. I stated that if, he (the pastor), would not allow me to talk, that I couldn’t give him the information from the Bible that God wanted me to give him. The pastor then stated: “You don’t have the spiritual authority to rebuke me.” Well, in all honesty, I wasn’t trying to personally rebuke him. If there was any rebuking, it was from 2 Timothy 3:16 shown above. Or, perhaps Hebrews 4:12 which reads: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (NKJ)

Instead, I was simply trying to review some Bible verses with him in order to understand why he would teach something opposite of what the Bible had to say. As he espoused his “spiritual authority” dialogue, it was like another epiphany for me. A big light bulb was lit for me by God. All I could hear in my mind was, it’s over. It was like God had just told me emphatically -- “you cannot reason with the pastor. There is no Godly wisdom.” Remember James 3:17? I told the

pastor: “Thanks for the meeting. I was able to find out what God wanted me to know. Further, I wouldn’t be coming back to his church.”

I have since studied the spiritual issues extensively. I have read up on spiritually abusive ministries and even studied the characteristics of cults. What have I learned?

First, there appears to be a code-of-silence. Enforced psychologically as the pastor consistently told the congregation not to talk with those that had left. I watched as an estimated 400-600 people left this church. I knew many of these people. Many I could count as friends. However, not one of them took the time to warn me that I might be attending a spiritually abusive ministry. Not one of them warned me that the ministry might, in fact, be a cult. Not one of them warned me that the senior pastor was subtly perverting the word of God in order to manipulate the people’s behavior. This was one aspect of the code-of-silence. It was outside of the congregation and involved those who had left but knew something was wrong at this ministry.

Another aspect of this code-of-silence was “within” the congregation and came from those who, on the inside — knew something was wrong. Who, for whatever reasons, chose to ignore what was going on. I can immediately think of a ton of staff members who were cycled in and out of this ministry. Not one of them dared to speak out. Some families I know even chose to leave the state. I suspect the real reason they left was to simply get out of the “grip” of this ministry. So what about me? Do I choose to speak out or remain silent? If so, why? For what purpose? Of course, I choose to speak out. I choose to speak out to warn you and the people still there -- some friends -- that indeed, something is wrong. Something is perverse at this ministry. The answer, for me, was contained in the Bible. “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you and obey you (pastor) rather than God, you must decide (judge). But we [ourselves] cannot help telling what we have seen and heard. — And now, Lord, observe their threats and grant to Your bond servants [full freedom] to declare Your message fearlessly.” Acts 4:19-20, 23

The message I declare for God is simple. Enter this ministry with caution. The foundation of the ministry is proclaimed to be the Holy Bible. However, the message is subtly changed, by the senior pastor, from the actual word of God. For those who cherish God’s Word -- listen well & carefully. There are no warning signs on the front door of this ministry. This article may be all you ever read about it. For those who believe in God and seek a deeper level of spiritual fulfillment, it is important to remember God’s Grace through His Son Jesus. Jesus spent His time uplifting people. He didn’t spend it judging, condemning or manipulating people.

Second, and even more important than the code-of-silence, are that the perverted teachings of this pastor are not all that twisted in the context of the words that he preaches. However, his teachings are perverted in just the right way to effect certain types of behavior from the members of his congregation. If this pastor had not taught for many months on Malachi 3:10, which I knew from heart, perhaps his perverted November 20th teaching would have gone unnoticed by me. However, it was a wakeup call for me to think about what he is actually teaching in the context of what God's Word actually says. I have observed many other perverted teachings from this pastor. Consider these two additional examples. Then, ask yourself: Why would any pastor teach these things? Unless he wanted to manipulate people's behavior.

The pastor has taught not to talk with those who left the church (a can't talk rule). However, in Malachi 3:16, it reads: "Then those who feared the Lord talked often one to another; and the Lord listened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who revered and worshipfully feared the Lord and who thought on His name."

The pastor instructed his ushers to stop anyone from praying for someone else while in the sanctuary. In fact, he told the people of his congregation that if they (the people) wanted to pray for someone (in the church) that they should get their own ministry. However, in James 5:16, it reads: "Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]."

I could write several pages on the perverted teachings of this ministry. Teachings that cannot be reconciled with the written word of God. However, all of them have one thing in common. The perverted teachings have psychological manipulation in the background. Several people I know have suffered enormous emotional damage at the hands of this ministry. I can't help but asked the question: "What's going on?" I have attended this church two or more times a week for almost four years. I have grown enormously in my faith over this period of time. Still, I cannot simply ignore what I have witnessed that is presently going on. I cannot live in the past "good old times" and stay silent in the present and thereby let innocent people and their families be manipulated and spiritually abused in the name of God.

Jude 1:3 reads: "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Contend earnestly for your faith is a Biblical command. Keeping silent and letting other Christians and their families get abused because one

doesn't want to get involved or suffer the consequences of "spilling the beans" is not what God would have any Christian do. To those (elders, staff, assistant pastor, some who left, some current members and others) who knew of the problems associated with this ministry and chose to "ignore the Bible" and instead to "keep silent" -- God's Word says: "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9) It is to Him you will have to answer to. Not me. Notwithstanding others from this congregation who may have actually been spiritually abused or manipulated by this ministry.

We are not only to contend for our faith but the issue was settled by God's grace through the salvation He has given us through faith in Christ Jesus. There is nothing you can do to "buy" or "work" your way into heaven. It is an insult to people of faith to state otherwise. Romans 11:6 reads: "But if it is by grace (His unmerited favor and graciousness), it is no longer conditioned on works or anything men have done. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace [it would be meaningless]." You are not going to buy your way into a better position with God with adding "offerings" on top of your "tithes." Nor by giving out of some form of guilt that the pastor lays upon you. You cannot miss out on God's Grace because of something you do or something you don't do for your pastor -- no matter what he says. God's Word is plain enough on this issue.

And, if you think the pastor really understands God's tithe, ask him to teach on God's tithing instructions contained in Deuteronomy 14: 22-29. Especially verse 26 where God says: ". . . you shall eat your tithe (money was converted to food) before the Lord your God and you shall rejoice, you and your household." When was the last time your pastor told you to eat your tithe like God has commanded here? Why tithe today? It's simple and the real tithe answer is in verse 23 where the Word states: "that you may learn [reverently] to fear the Lord your God always." It is a relationship thing. Put God into your finances and He will do wondrous things. But, don't do it out of obligation or thinking you are going to buy results from the Almighty. This is either foolishness or religious dogma. It is either a "works theology" or "guilt!"

A ministry that puts a monetary "works theology" into play has ulterior motives. Especially if it is all the ministry teaches about for years. This particular pastor is so bold that he has even publicly (within a worship meeting) ordained his own son and daughter into his ministry as pastors. Why not just buy an ordained minister's certificate from the Universal Church for \$25? Is there any difference from this or in having your father "ordain" you at the age of 19-20? Does this pastor (ministry) have some self-serving family-oriented ulterior motives? I have found two answers to the enigma of this ministry.

The first answer I found is very disturbing to me. In their book titled "The SUBTLE POWER of SPIRITUAL ABUSE" Copyright 1991, authors David Johnson & Jeff VanVonderen of the Open

Door Church in Minneapolis detail out a description of false spiritual authority within the church. I'm saddened to say that this book details out a complete description of the ministry I just left in Elk River. The ministry is marked by a strong charismatic leader whose congregational needs are not served very well. Rather, instead, it is the needs of the pastor and his family that are served by the congregation. If you disagree with the pastor, you become the problem. You (the problem) "have difficulty with spiritual authority and need to repent and pray about it."

There is even an elitist atmosphere in the ministry that those outside of the congregation simply "won't understand." So, at the very least, spiritual abuse is going on at this ministry in the name of God. It is described in detail in the above book. Community warning: There is a spiritually abusive system in Elk River that is harming people and their families! And, there is no warning sign at the front door of this ministry. So, spiritual community, consider yourselves warned.

The second answer I found is even more disturbing. I have heard it said, from the pulpit no less and by the senior pastor himself, that "some people have called us a cult." Now, I haven't given this a whole lot of thought before. Nor has anyone came up to me and said: 'Did you know you were going to a cult?' Quite frankly, I didn't even know what all of the attributes of a cult were. So, I decided to research the issue to get better informed. I quickly located an Internet site in the United Kingdom called the CIC or Cult Information Center. I found that there are five common characteristics of all cults.

The CIC information states: "Every cult can be defined as a group having all of the following five characteristics: 1) It uses psychological coercion to recruit, indoctrinate and retain its members; 2) It forms an elitist totalitarian society; 3) Its founder leader is self-appointed, dogmatic, messianic, not accountable and has charisma; 4) It believes 'the end justifies the means' in order to solicit funds and recruit people; and, 5) Its wealth does not benefit its members or society." I'm saddened to say that this ministry exhibits all five of these characteristics. By CIC definition, this ministry is a cult. There is no warning sign on the front door of the church! So, spiritual community, consider yourselves warned.

What is important for this community to know is simple enough. If you are going to a church and you are starting to feel worn out and it's getting worse over time--it is time to leave. It is also important to stick with all of the written Word of God without perverting it. I find it often amusing to hear Christians proclaim that they don't believe this or that about what the Bible has to say about a subject. I find it amusing because I wonder, if that's really the case, what makes these same people then think they can believe what the Bible says about their salvation through Christ Jesus. Hebrews 10:26-29 has a clear warning for all of us. The Amplified version reads.

“For if we go on deliberately and willingly sinning after once acquiring the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice left to atone for [our] sins [no further offering to which to look [forward]. [There is nothing left for us then] but a kind of awful and fearful prospect and expectation of divine judgment and fury of burning wrath and indignation which will consume those who put themselves in opposition [to God]. Any person who has violated and [thus] rejected the Law of Moses is put to death without pity or mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse (sterner and heavier) punishment do you suppose he will be judged to deserve who has spurned and [thus] trampled underfoot the Son of God, and who has considered the covenant blood by which he was consecrated common and unhallowed, thus profaning it and insulting and outraging the [Holy] Spirit [Who imparts] grace (the unmerited favor and blessing of God)?”

All of which is to say that God’s salvation through Christ Jesus is not to be considered a common thing; not by anyone. Jesus is not someone or something that we can simply “take for granted.” All believers are called towards repentance. To try and live a better life; a holier life. When we fall short, it is God’s Grace that covers our sins through the blood of Christ Jesus. It is dangerous to attend church on Sunday and then think that our behavior the rest of the week doesn’t matter. You have an obligation to try and live a better life if you claim Jesus Christ as your savior. At least that is what Hebrews is talking about in the above verses.

It is equally dangerous for a ministry to assume it can manipulate Bible believing Christians -- for an unlimited amount of time. This IS a small town. My family and I have lived here for 24 years and I expect to die here at a ripe old age. For me, it is decidedly treating Jesus as a common thing when a ministry emphasizes “money” over God’s “grace” through Christ Jesus. It is decidedly treating Jesus as a common thing when Sunday services present God as some sort of lottery operation. “You never know what offering God will bless. You need to give something in every offering.” Those who are teachers and elders who help shepherd the flock have special responsibilities. They will be held accountable by God. It is especially dangerous for a ministry that proclaims “all of the Bible” -- to then ignore what it actually has to say. At best, this is called hypocrisy. At worse, it is called deception.

Godly Wisdom, Spiritual Abuse or Cult? You decide! For me, I have done my study and investigated the facts. I have created a transcript of the November 20 perverted teaching and consulted with several church members who have verified this and other false teachings. I’ve made up my mind. The ministry I just left is clearly a cult that is spiritually abusing the members of its congregation in the name of God.

Spiritual community, consider yourselves warned. To those of you who have actually been spiritually abused, I highly recommend the book I mentioned earlier. It is carried in stock at the local book store. I would also encourage you to seek counseling and even to speak out concerning your own experiences with this or any other spiritually abusive ministry. "The Scripture says, No man who believes in Him [who adheres to, relies on, and trusts in Him] will [ever] be put to shame or be disappointed." [Romans 10:11] For the love of God and His spiritual community in and around Elk River! Ed Palmer, Otsego.

End of Letter To Editor

Conclusion

Conclusion

There is a serious problem at Solid Rock Church in Elk River, Minnesota. The problem is that Bill Matthews' Ministry is in essence a cult designed to serve his needs and those of his family. Bill Matthews has deceived the people of his congregation, the Assembly of God Ministries and the AFCM Ministries. He has used cult techniques and deception as tools for usurping the property and rights of his congregation (formerly Elk River Assembly of God). The facility and property, which were once a part of the Assembly of God Ministries of Minnesota, were in fact systematically stolen. They were stolen first from the Assemblies of God and secondly from the members of his congregation. It appears that most people currently active in the congregation do not have a clue about Matthews' disaffiliation from the AFCM Ministries (pages 27-28).

Bill Matthews' Ministry meets 100% of all five characteristics common to cults as defined and published by the Cult Information Centre (page 15). He scores a 74% rating on another cult attributes list (page 54); a 85% rating on the use of mind control techniques (pages 55-56); and, a 100% rating based on image orientation. The author of this report spent nearly 4 years at this church observing this ministry. Looking back, there are clear milestones and markers where Bill Matthews systematically gained control over the church. During this process, hundreds of members of this congregation left. Like other cults, there is a shrinking down process that takes place as the true "cult" nature of the ministry becomes clearer to its members. Posing as a born-again, spirit-filled, on-fire preacher for God -- Matthews proclaims that he stands on the Word of God. However, the facts are clear that he does not. He twists God's Word (Bible) to gain advantage over people, groups & organizations. Often, this is very subtle.

Bill Matthews' Ministry is easily compared to the Heaven's Gate Cult by simply examining the attributes of cults, their mind control methods and the blind often mindless following of many people. Sack's cartoon of people throwing away their brains (page 5) sums it all up. We search for easy answers. And, we wind up following a charismatic leader who seems to have them. We are then dragged through a confusing morass of difficult spiritual concepts. Sure of one thing. We love God and don't want to rot in hell. The cult leader appears to have all the answers: so, we choose to follow him. Lazy, we easily forget God's Word.

The sad part about this particular ministry is that its potential for greatness did exist for a season. However, Matthews' appears to have caved into greed and the easy exploitation of people. Powerful corrupters of the human existence, both power over people's lives and easy

offering money are the two main motivators of Bill Matthews. That's all he preaches about from the pulpit of his cult. Like Elk River Assembly of God in past days, the people (elders & deacons) who could have prevented this tragedy failed in their duties of oversight.

People are easily deceived when a charismatic preacher is not held accountable to the Word of God that he professes to preach. This is the reason for elders, deacons, district, national and other oversight associations. Let everyone beware of this local cult in Elk River. It's not yet fully devolved to the point where everyone is a mindless robot. However, it is continuing to shrink in its membership towards this direction. Those that remain are being pulled deeper into the sophisticated mind control games and activities of Matthews. All of this is done, of course, in the name of God. In the name of Jesus.

“For there is nothing hidden that shall not be disclosed, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come out into the open. Be careful therefore how you listen. For to him who has [spiritual knowledge] will more be given; and from him who does not have [spiritual knowledge], even what he thinks and guesses and supposes that he has will be taken away.” Luke 8:17-18

“For every wrongdoer hates (loathes, detests) the Light, and will not come out into the Light *but* shrinks from it, lest his works (his deeds, his activities, his conduct) be exposed *and* reprov'd. But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him].” John 3:20-21

“And when you sin against your brethren in this way, wounding and damaging their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.” 1 Corinthians 8:12

“So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin. James 4:17

“For [the Spirit which] you have now received [is] not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage . . .” Romans 8:15

Another Cult Characteristics Rating 74%

Characteristics of Cults

- The dictionary defines a cult as "A group of followers."
- Psychologists define a cult "as a group which deviates from cultural norms."
- For our purposes "A cult is a spurious or unorthodox system of religious beliefs and ritual."

Depending on whose list you are looking at, there are numerous traits that characterize a cult. We are going to use the following:

- * 1. Faulty interpretation of the Bible
- 2. They question authority of the Bible
- * 3. Salvation by grace is added to "Salvation = Faith + Works"
- 4. Their god or gods are not the God of the Bible
- * 5. Doctrinal changes - " progressive revelation "
- * 6. Add extra-scriptural writings
- * 7. Saying one thing in public, another in private
- * 8. Only group God deals with - " remnant "
- * 9. Date setting - false prophecies
- 10. Vigorously attacks Christianity
- * 11. Concept of Jesus is contrary to truth of Bible
- * 12. Head of the organization comes between God and man
- * 13. Claim to answer all religious questions
- * 14. Division of believers loyalty between church & God
- * 15. " Us against the world " attitude
- * 16. Eschatology, or the Doctrine of Last Things is overemphasized
- 17. Deny personality of Holy Spirit
- 18. Different view of immortality of soul
- * 19. Definitions of human nature & sin different from Bible

Progressive Revelation

This is used by many of the cults to keep members in line. By being able to change their doctrines "as the light grows brighter".

Cult leaders can maintain control by emphasizing that there is no where else to go to receive this special knowledge.

USED *
AT Bill
MATTHEWS'
MINISTRY
14/19 = 74%

X Back

[Return to Cult Menu](#)

Mind Control Techniques Rating 85%

Mind Control Techniques



Hypnosis

Inducing a state of high suggestibility by hypnosis, often thinly disguised as relaxation or meditation.



Peer Group Pressure

Suppressing doubt and resistance to new ideas by exploiting the need to belong.



Love Bombing

Creating a sense of family and belonging through hugging, kissing, touching and flattery.



Rejection of Old Values

Accelerating acceptance of new life style by constantly denouncing former values and beliefs.



Confusing Doctrine

Encouraging blind acceptance and rejection of logic through complex lectures on an incomprehensible doctrine



Metacommunication

Implanting subliminal messages by stressing certain key words or phrases in long, confusing lectures.



Removal of Privacy

Achieving loss of ability to evaluate logically by preventing private contemplation.



Time Sense Deprivation

Destroying ability to evaluate information, personal reactions, and body functions in relation to passage of time by removing all clocks and watches.



Disinhibition

Encouraging child-like obedience by orchestrating child-like behaviour.



Uncompromising Rules

Inducing regression and disorientation by soliciting agreement to seemingly simple rules which regulate mealtimes, bathroom breaks and use of medications.

Verbal Abuse

Desensitizing through bombardment with foul and abusive language.



Sleep Deprivation and Fatigue

Creating disorientation and vulnerability by prolonging mental and physical activity and withholding adequate rest and sleep.

Dress Codes

Removing individuality by demanding conformity to the group dress code.



Chanting and Singing

Eliminating non-cult ideas through group repetition of mind-narrowing chants or phrases.



Confession

Encouraging the destruction of individual ego through confession of personal weaknesses and innermost feelings of doubt.



Financial Commitment

Achieving increased dependence on the group by 'burning bridges' to the past, through the donation of assets.

<http://www.infoman.demon.co.uk/mindctrl.html>

Sundav. March 23. 19

Mind Control Techniques Rating 85%

- * **Finger Pointing**
Creating a false sense of righteousness by pointing to the shortcomings of the outside world and other cults.
- * **Flaunting Hierarch**
Promoting acceptance of cult authority by promising advancement, power and salvation.
- * **Isolation**
Inducing loss of reality by physical separation from family, friends, society and rational references.
- * **Controlled Approval**
Maintaining vulnerability and confusion by alternately rewarding and punishing similar actions.
- Change of Diet**
Creating disorientation and increased susceptibility to emotional arousal by depriving the nervous system of necessary nutrients through the use of special diets and/or fasting.
- Games**
Inducing dependence on the group by introducing games with obscure rules.
- * **No Questions**
Accomplishing automatic acceptance of beliefs by discouraging questions.
- * **Guilt**
Reinforcing the need for 'salvation' by exaggerating the sins of the former lifestyles.
- * **Fear**
Maintaining loyalty and obedience to the group by threatening soul, life or limb for the slightest 'negative' thought, word or deed.
- * **Replacement of Relationships**
Destroying pre-cult families by arranging cult marriages and 'families'.

Comments or Questions to ([Cult Information Centre](#))
(Please note that there is a delay of 2 or 3 weeks when CIC respond by e-mail.
Writing to the address or phoning are viable options.)
Go back to [CIC Site Index](#)
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* Used By Bill Matthews' Ministry
22/26 = 84.6%

Look For These Marks

(p136 “The Subtle Power Of Spiritual Abuse”)

To close this section, we refer to 1 Peter 5:1–5, as the apostle speaks of a true shepherd. Contrast Peter’s list of characteristics with the characteristics we have examined:

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

How do we spot an image-oriented leader? Look for these marks:

- ✓ • They operate from a false basis of authority.
- ✓ • They lack integrity.
- ✓ • They wear their spirituality on the outside.
- ✓ • Spirituality is a put-on performance, an image they project.
- ✓ • They require the recognition of people, calling it respect.
- ✓ • They point to themselves as the primary source of knowledge, direction, authority, and life.

$$6/6 = 100\%$$

Image Oriented Rating 100%

Bill Matthews scores a 100% rating on the above “image oriented” scale.

Appendix A

Bill Matthews, Senior Pastor
Solid Rock Church
11800 196th Avenue NW
Elk River, Minnesota 55330

April 15, 1997

Dear Mr. Matthews:

After five months of study and review, I have decided to make the attached report on your ministry public. The information is too much of a public concern for me to simply ignore. This in-depth review of your ministry and its teachings began with your perverted tithe teaching of November 20, 1996. On that date, God told me to choose. HIS Word or yours. No contest.

Having spent nearly four years worshipping God at Solid Rock Church, I am at a loss to explain why you and your ministry have chosen the course of actions it has. For at least a season, I would have expected a great ministry to emerge from your efforts. I would have never expected that a self-serving spiritually-abusing cult would emerge. Not in the name of Jesus.

Your own words and actions condemn you in God's eyes. Especially your corporate resolution dated November 7, 1996 withdrawing Solid Rock Church from its AFCM affiliation. After nearly a year of effort to disaffiliate with the Assembly of God Ministries and two solid votes from the members to affiliate with AFCM Ministries, you took it upon yourself (family & staff included) to disaffiliate the congregation from the AFCM. You, your staff and family had no authority to do this. Period. And, there are no excuses. Your AFCM "Corporate Resolution" of 11/7/96 is a big lie and ignores the congregations' 9/12/96 (2nd) vote to affiliate. It's that simple. Did you use AFCM as a way to dump the Assembly of God? When the AG dropped its lawsuit, was the fraud complete?

It also now appears to be a premeditated and preplanned power grab for all of Solid Rock's property. God says to inform you that it doesn't belong to you and your family. It belongs to Him! Further, God says to tell you that you were not suppose to "possess" His property. "They have homes and cities and pasturage to use but not to possess as their personal inheritance. . ." Numbers 18:24 Amplified Version.

Ministers are not suppose to lie to their congregations. Your corporate resolution on page 27 of the attached report is exactly that. It's an enormous lie. It also encompasses fraud when viewed with many of your other actions and the fact that Solid Rock Church's property is probably worth between \$1.5 - 3.0 Million in a real estate market that is stressed for commercial property with easy access. Do you suppose that if you drive enough members out of the congregation that you can simply liquidate God's property with a family vote?

It is time that your family, staff and all of those in leadership at Solid Rock Church remove themselves from the ministry. As a consistent and systematic perverter of God's Holy Word, you are unfit for His service. Those who have failed in their responsibility to hold you accountable to His Word are likewise unfit. This includes all deacons, trustees and head ushers. When the congregation voted to affiliate with the AFCM, it did not give you the authority to create a "family

business” nor did it give you the authority to “do your own thing.” It is sheer audacity that at the same time you told all of us in the congregation that we were affiliated with the AFCM -- that in secret, behind the congregation’s back -- you disaffiliated us from the AFCM. To use your favorite metaphor: “How dumb can you be and still breathe?”

It is now time that the church and its property be turned over to Mac Hammond Ministries and the AFCM for a complete reorganization. Notice should be sent to the members of record of the very first AFCM affiliation vote in late 1995 or early 1996. Also, it should be sent to the members of the second vote which occurred on 9/12/96 less than 60 days prior to your unauthorized disaffiliation corporate resolution. Those members or ex-members should form the group that determines the next course of action for the church. It excludes yourself, your family, staff and other leadership [those that have allowed you to get away with your false teachings and lies].

I will not personally file a lawsuit against your ministry for fraud. However, unless the church and its property have been turned over to Mac Hammond Ministries and the AFCM, I will turn over this report and all documentation of church activities to the Sherburne County Attorney’s office and call for a criminal fraud investigation on Monday, June 30, 1997. If the church has been surrendered for a reorganization prior to this date, I will leave the matter in the members’ hands with AFCM guidance. I will encourage other outraged church members or prior members to do the same. This should make it easier on you and your family to move on in life.

If you choose to remain and fight, please be advised that everything will be aired in the public domain. Every ministry ever connected to yours will also be informed and information about your cult will be published onto the Internet. Because this is a deep public concern, I am fully prepared and I have the resolve to see this through to its end. Until every single person in and around Elk River and connected to your ministry is made fully aware of the truth about your ministry, its deception and spiritually abusive cult techniques and lies.

The public concern I have is quite simple. Your ministry is a cult that is spiritually abusing people. Your cult is preying on weak Christians. With the constant influx of new people into the Elk River area, there is a constant stream of new people for your ministry to deceive and abuse. It is not in the public’s interest for our community to have such cult deception going on. Especially in the name of Jesus. By way of a copy of this letter and report, I am asking the appropriate oversight ministries to do their part so that your cult does not continue its existence at Solid Rock Church in Elk River MN.

Sincerely yours,

Edward G. Palmer
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

cc: Mac Hammond Ministries
Jim Kaseman Ministries & AFCM
Assembly of God Minnesota District
Don Heinzman, Elk River Star News
Martha Allen, Minneapolis StarTribune
Bill King, Associate Pastor

SOLID ROCK CHURCH

11800 196th Avenue NW ♦ Elk River Minnesota 55330 ♦ (612) 441-2816

April 23, 1997

Edward G. Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

Dear Mr. Palmer,

I received your letter and packet of information dated April 15, 1997.

I would like to invite you to a meeting with myself and my board on Saturday, April 26th, 1997 at 3:00pm. The meeting will be in my church office, please enter through the North entrance. The Bible says in Matthew 18:15-17, if a brother has offended (trespassed, sinned) against thee go to him & tell him his fault...

Ed, I am interested in keeping you as a brother and resolving these issues. You are misinformed of some facts and should be made aware of them.

Look forward to seeing you Saturday at 3:00pm.

In Christ,

Pastor Bill Matthews

Pastor Bill Matthews

Signed in his absence per his request.

BNM/krs

A Place of Love and Healing

Bill Matthews, Senior Pastor
Solid Rock Church
11800 196th Avenue NW
Elk River, Minnesota 55330

April 25, 1997

VIA FAX

Dear Mr. Matthews:

Thanks for your offer of a meeting tomorrow at 3:00 PM. at Solid Rock Church with you and your "board." I am unable to attend tomorrow's meeting. However, I would be willing to meet with you and your board under certain conditions.

Prior to such a meeting, I will need to see a written explanation of your "Corporate Resolution" withdrawing Solid Rock Church from its AFCM affiliation. This will have to be accompanied with: A) a copy of the notice to the members announcing the November 7, 1996 business meeting or the dates that such a meeting was announced and posted within Solid Rock's sanctuary; B) a copy of the roster of those present at the November 7, 1996 meeting; and, C) a copy of the meeting minutes from the November 7, 1996 meeting.

I keep a contemporaneous record and diary of my life 24 hours a day. I have done this for well over a decade. As a businessman, I also make it a point to always attend business meetings and to vote in those organizations that I am a member of. Because of very detailed record keeping—I do not believe for a moment that I could be misinformed. However, if there exists a valid member vote on AFCM disaffiliation, it will be supported in the context of these documents. If so, I will be more than happy to be further informed on other subjects during a face-to-face group meeting.

If you will supply the above documentation along with three proposed meeting times, we can take this discussion further. Any subsequently agreed to face-to-face group meeting will need to meet the following additional conditions: A) the meeting will have to be held at a neutral site; B) all attendees will have to be identified in advance with no additional attendees brought in at the last minute; and, C) I will have to be accompanied by several other prior members, seven in total.

Sincerely yours,



Edward G. Palmer
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

cc: Don Heinzman

SOLID ROCK CHURCH

11800 196th Avenue NW ♦ Elk River Minnesota 55330 ♦ (612) 441-2816

May 4, 1997

Mr. Ed Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Elk River MN 55330

Dear Ed:

Thank you for your response to my offer to meet. I am sorry the time didn't work for you. Obviously your intent for a meeting was different than mine. I was just trying to help you with your misunderstandings.

If there are others who have issues, may I suggest that you encourage them to make an appointment with me by themselves. I am always interested in talking with anyone who wants to communicate. This would be the Biblical pattern.

In Christ,


Pastor Bill Matthews

A Place of Love and Healing

*Rec'd
5/9/97*

Bill Matthews, Senior Pastor
Solid Rock Church
11800 196th Avenue NW
Elk River, Minnesota 55330

May 8, 1997

VIA FAX

Dear Mr. Matthews:

I am in receipt of your second letter dated May 4, 1997. Your thoughts [that I am under some type of a misunderstanding] are clear enough in both of the two letters you sent. There is no need for further communication.

I will proceed as specified in my letter dated April 15, 1997.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward G. Palmer". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'E' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'P'.

Edward G. Palmer
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

cc: Don Heinzman

LivingWord
CHRISTIAN CENTER

May 5, 1997

Mr. Edward Palmer
15548 95th Circle N.E.
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

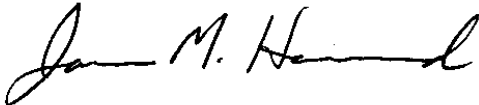
RE: Solid Rock Church

Dear Mr. Palmer:

We have received your packet of unsolicited information regarding Pastor Bill Matthews and Solid Rock Church. Your letters and materials could easily be construed as carrying the endorsement of Mac Hammond Ministries and/or Living Word Christian Center. For your information, Living Word Christian Center, Mac Hammond Ministries International, and any of our affiliated auxiliaries do not necessarily agree with your analysis or position regarding Pastor Bill Matthews and Solid Rock Church.

To avoid confusion, please refrain from involving the names of our organizations in your crusade.

Very truly yours,



James M. Hammond

JMH/RLR

cc: Jim Kaseman Ministries
Assembly of God, Minnesota District
Donald Heinzman, Editor Elk River Star News
Martha Allen, Minneapolis Star Tribune
William King, Associate Pastor
William Matthews, Senior Pastor

*Rec'd
5/10/97*



ASSOCIATION OF
FAITH CHURCHES
AND MINISTERS

Julius "Jim" Kaseman, President
P.O. Box 701888, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74170-1888
(918) 492-4141 FAX (918) 492-5503

May 2, 1997

Mr. Ed Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Elk River, MN 55330

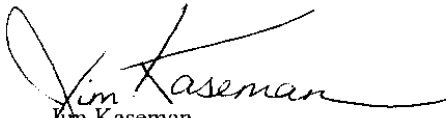
Dear Mr. Palmer,

I am writing in response to your letter dated April 15, 1997.

I am not in agreement with your letter or your approach to the Solid Rock Church situation.

In the future, I would appreciate it if you would not use my name or the name of AFCM.

Sincerely,


Jim Kaseman
JK/dw

cc: Pastor Mac Hammond
Pastor Bill Matthews


JWD
5/6/97

Religion

Church Directory

CHURCH
ELCA

1103 School St., Elk River
• 441-2363 • Fax 441-0010

Sunday Worship Services
8:15, 9:30 & 10:45 a.m.
Education 9:30 & 10:45 a.m.
& Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
Pastors: Cedric J. Olson, Richard D. Erickson,
Richard A. Hofstad & Donna J. Rohrer

CHURCH

Contemporary Service
8:30 & 9:45 a.m.
Traditional Service 11:00 a.m.
Evening Service - Small groups 6:00 p.m.
Sunday School - 9:45 a.m.

Wednesdays:
Adult Bible study and prayer, 7 p.m.
Boys' Brigade & Pioneer Club 6:45 p.m.
Youth Alive (Jr. & Sr. High)

19653 Nowthen Blvd. NW
Anoka Co. Rds. 5 & 22 • 441-1600

Grace Assembly of God

Meadowvale School Cafeteria
12701 Elk Lake Rd.
(Co. Rd. 1)
241-1111

Pastor Mike Olson

Sunday Services:
Sunday Morning
Worship 9:30 a.m.
Evening 6:00 p.m.

- Adult Bible Study
- Youth Ministry
- Royal Rangers
- Missionettes

COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Meets in the Chorus Room
(R. 12) at
VANDENBERGE JR. HIGH SCHOOL

Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.
Jr. Worship Service
Sunday Bible School Classes at 9:30 a.m.

Classes for all ages
Call for information
Robert W. Myers, Minister
(812) 767-8780

Enter Door "M" from S. Parking Lot

Faith Community Lutheran

3/4 mi. S. of Zimmerman • 856-3600
(west side of Hwy. 169)
Sunday Worship Service 9:30 a.m.
Wednesday Nite Service 7:30 p.m.
Pastor James Walburg

To place an ad in this directory call the
Elk River Star News at
441-3500

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the corners of Hwy 101 and
County Road 39 in Otsego 441-5097

Sunday Worship Services:
8:15 AM 9:15 AM 10:45 AM
Dr. Gregory M. Pugh, Senior Pastor

"Kids Church" 9:15 AM
Grades 3 - 6 at Otsego Elementary

"Caraway Street" 9:15 & 10:45 AM
For 3 yr old - 2nd Grade at church

"J.A.M." 9:15 AM
For Jr. High and Sr. High at Otsego Elementary

LIVING WATERS Church

Meeting Sunday Mornings at 9:45 a.m.
And Sunday Evenings at 6:00 p.m.

Vandenberg Jr. High School
Corner of School St. & Proctor Ave.

Children's Classes 9 Months thru 8th Grade
Youth Group 7th Grade thru 12th Grade
Mid-week Small Group Meetings

Bob Puller, Pastor
Church Office 241-9682
19050 Industrial Blvd. Suite #4, Elk River

A Non-Denominational Church Where
Everybody is Somebody and Jesus is Lord



Pastors Bill & Mary Matthews

Solid Rock Church

Christian Education (all ages) 9:00 am
Sunday Morning Worship 10:00 am
Sunday Evening 7:00 pm
Wednesday Evening 7:00 pm

Nursery • Children's • Youth • Seniors
"This is That" Book & Praise
Christian Academy (K-12)
Solid Rock Bible Institute
(Call for more information.)

A Place of Love & Healing

1 mile N. of Elk River on the West side of Hwy. 169.
11800 196th Ave. NW, Elk River 441-2816

lar importance in our lives. Memorial Day is a time to honor those who have given us heritage of freedom, courage, and commitment to the ideals we hold dear in

placed. Our country has gotten so fixated on youth, achievement, success that we have quietly pushed our seniors to the edges of society to fend

Godly Men Don't Lie!

They practice the truth. John 3:21
They are straight-forward. James 3:17

CORPORATE RESOLUTION

At a meeting of SOLID ROCK CHURCH, INC. Elk River, Minnesota, held on November 7, 1996, a motion was made and carried that SOLID ROCK CHURCH, INC. disaffiliate from ASSOCIATION OF FAITH CHURCHES AND MINISTERS, INC. (AFCM).

Date 4/7/97

Ed Palmer
President (Pastor)

There was no notice of a church meeting, no meeting and no vote. In contrast, the members voted to affiliate with the AFCM on 9/12/96. Matthews' resolution is a lie, a deception and even a betrayal. If you are one of the estimated 400-600 people who have left Solid Rock, we'd like to hear of your experiences. We also solicit your prayers and financial support. If you are in need of spiritual counseling as a result of this ministry, please write. All letters will be treated in strict confidence. A detailed 70 page report on this ministry titled "Godly Wisdom, Spiritual Abuse, or Cult?" has been published. To obtain a copy, send your written request (donations accepted) to: James 417 Association, PO Box 568, Elk River, MN 55330. Ed Palmer, Chair

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Winters, King & Associates, Inc.

Attorneys and Counselors at Law
2448 East 81st Street • Suite 5900
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Telephone (918) 494-6868
Facsimile (918) 491-6297

Oklahoma City Office

3714 Classen Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
Telephone (405) 557-1700
Facsimile (405) 524-8102

June 6, 1997

Mr. Edward G. Palmer
1548 95th Cir. NE
Otsego, MN 55330

Re: Solid Rock Church & Pastor Bill Matthews

Dear Mr. Palmer:

I represent Pastor Bill Matthews and Solid Rock Church. On behalf of my clients, thank you for your letter, dated April 15, 1997.

My clients regret that you are dissatisfied with the spiritual leadership and teachings of Pastor Matthews and that you feel that Solid Rock Church no longer meets your spiritual needs. However, my clients also must strongly refute the accusations you make in your letter and in your lengthy essay.

First, the decision of the Board of Trustees of the church to disaffiliate from AFCM was entirely within its legal authority. In the late summer or early fall of 1995, the church congregation voted to disaffiliate with the Assemblies of God. At the time, the congregation also voted to amend the church governing documents in whatever means required to affiliate the church with AFCM. One such change by AFCM was the removal of congregational authority over church decision making, in favor of board authority over the same. The church meeting in September of 1996 was conducted at the suggestion of this office merely to reaffirm disaffiliation with the Assemblies of God. At the time, the congregation again granted the Board of Trustees authority over church decision making.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees in early November, the board concluded that it was the Lord's will that the church disaffiliate from AFCM. This decision was not taken lightly, but was made only after much prayer and careful consideration. The Board was legally authorized under the articles of incorporation and bylaws of the church to take such a step, and was in fact acting in furtherance of the decision-making mandate of the congregation.

Second, it is neither legal, nor even possible, for Pastor Matthews to liquidate church property, as you allege is his intent. Rules of the Internal Revenue Service, as well as the provisions of the articles of incorporation of the church, require that upon dissolution the assets of the church must

Mr. Edward Palmer
May 28, 1997
Page -2-

be turned over, first, to creditors of the corporation, and second, to other tax-exempt religious or charitable organizations. More importantly, it is the intent of Pastor Matthews to continue to follow the will of the Lord in creating a growing, flourishing church. Thus, even if the Pastor had the power to seize church assets, he has no intent or desire to do so.

Mr. Palmer, the assertions found in your letter, as well as those found in your lengthy essay regarding Pastor Matthews and the church, are entirely false. On behalf of my clients, I demand that you cease and desist in your efforts to discredit and defame Pastor Matthews and/or Solid Rock Church. If you refuse to cease these efforts, my clients will have no choice but to seek a restraining order against you and to file a lawsuit, seeking monetary compensation for both libel and slander.

Of course, my clients have no desire to sue a fellow believer. Instead, they sincerely hope and pray that this letter adequately addresses your concerns and that the Lord grants your heart peace so that you may move forward in your walk with Him.

Sincerely,



J. Daniel Beirute

JDB:jdb

cc: Mac Hammond Ministries
Jim Kaseman, AFCM
Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God

J. Daniel Beirute
Winters, King & Associates, Inc.
2448 East 81st Street, Suite 5900
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74137-4259

Bill Matthews, Senior Pastor
Solid Rock Church
11800 196th Avenue NW
Elk River, Minnesota 55330

June 11, 1997

Dear Mr. Beirute and Mr. Matthews:

In order to save you both some decision making time, I am addressing this letter to the two of you along with the other parties copied on the original letter to Mr. Matthews. I have added Mr. Matthews' parents to the list below because of my concern for other members of his family and the very serious nature of this matter. Your letter of June 6 provides written confirmation of what I had suspected may be the case. Without question or doubt, Mr. Matthews has committed fraud.

To eliminate any possible confusion, I will be perfectly blunt. I believe that I am in possession of all the facts and documents that I need to file a criminal fraud complaint against Mr. Matthews. I plan on filing that fraud complaint with both the Sherburne County Attorney and Minnesota's Attorney General's Office precisely at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, June 30, 1997 via registered certified mail.

The only thing that will prevent this is the resignation of Mr. Matthews and his staff and the immediate surrender of all church property back to the Minnesota District Assemblies of God Ministries. In my letter of April 15, I had asked that the church be returned to its members and AFCM. However, upon review of Mr. Beirute's letter of June 6, this is no longer acceptable.

This decision is yours, Mr. Matthews. However, and again, be advised that virtually every single document that I obtain will be made public including the June 6 letter from Mr. Beirute which has already been given to the Elk River Star News. There is no room for negotiation. If you want me to cease my activities, surrender all church property back to the Minnesota District Assemblies of God Ministries from whom you first stole it. Do this by June 30 which is less than 19 days away.

Now let me deal with a few items from the June 6 letter. First of all, rest assured that I have obtained the requisite legal advice prior to entering into this arena. I am the CEO of a small local manufacturing company and have been a corporate officer, director and shareholder of many companies over the last 20 years. I have a complete law library which does include the Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation Act of which Solid Rock was first created. I take all of these issues very seriously. Never in my life have I ever seen such a clear case of fraud and disenfranchisement.

If you would like to sue me, that certainly is one of your options. However, be prepared for the following: A) I have a constitutional right to free speech; B) The public has a right to know these things; C) You will have to prove that the truth I speak are lies as you claim them to be; D) You will be counter sued immediately and without hesitation; and, E) The venue is Sherburne County,

MN. Prior to releasing the information contained in my report, I had the entire content reviewed by other members who will attest to the veracity of my statements. In addition, I am in possession of written documents and audio tapes that will also support the veracity of my statements. Even as I write, copies of Mr. Matthews' taped messages are being collected and transcribed. I am also in direct contact with prior staff members who will verify the veracity of my statements. They will also attest to how Mr. Matthews lied to them.

My rhetorical question about liquidating the church property was just that, rhetorical. You assume dissolution. However, we all know that Mr. Matthews can simply trade assets for other assets and keep his now "very elite" non-profit corporation rolling a long time for the benefit of his family. We all also know that it will be a long time before the IRS would ever catch up. Knowledge is powerful; even to those with dishonorable intentions.

A "brother" is defined in Matthew 12:50. "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother . . ." (also in Mark 3:35) God's Word also defines who the children of God are. "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God . . ." 1 John 3:10 Further, and in 1 Corinthian 5:11, the Word says: "But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is . . . greedy . . . a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." A definition of a swindler according to the American Heritage Dictionary is "to cheat or defraud of money or property" or "to obtain by fraudulent means."

Despite what you or others that support him may believe, Mr. Matthews is NOT a brother in Christ. His actions speak otherwise and it is God's Word that condemns him, not I. I am entirely at peace with God over this matter. The actions that I take are those that the FATHER tells me to take. It has been that way for 19 years.

Now, some specificity concerning the fraud. Attached as Exhibit "A" is the resolution that the members of Solid Rock voted on July 11, 1995. Sixty members voted yes, five voted no and there was one abstention. I was present. It may have even been my motion to adopt this resolution. Part of the fraud is in this document. In the very last clause is the operative phrase "to present to the congregation at a later date." Everyone who voted that day will attest to the fact that we voted to set up a committee to find out what changes were needed to our articles (constitution) and by-laws and then that the committee was suppose "to present them at a later date" for the congregation to then vote on. That is typically how these things are handled in non-profit corporations where the exact changes needed are not yet known to the members. How could members vote on article changes that disenfranchised themselves when they are not even told what those changes are. This is the only resolution document that was provided concerning this matter.

Would you argue in a courtroom that the members freely and knowingly gave up their rights to the "one member-one vote rule" under Minnesota's Non-Profit Corporation Law based upon this single resolution that Mr. Matthews presented to us? I can tell you that no members voted to disenfranchise themselves. I can tell you that at no point were any members even appraised of this requirement of the AFCM. I was there! I voted, like others, to switch "accountability" entities.

Since your law firm is based in the same city as AFCM Ministries, Tulsa, Minnesota state attorneys may have other areas they want to explore such as possible collusion in the usurpation of property and rights away from members of Solid Rock and the AG Ministries in favor of AFCM. This could lead to undesirable publicity for your law firm, AFCM and Mac Hammond Ministries. Be advised that it is not I that have brought all these parties into this arena. It is Bill Matthews. As far as I know, he is the sole party responsible for this fraud and deception of God's Church.

For my part, I believe that your law firm, the AFCM and Mac Hammond Ministries are fully with God. I even have a daughter and her family whom are members of Mac Hammond Ministries at Living Word. However, like many others, all of you have been mightily deceived by Mr. Matthews.

The Word states: "They profess to know God [to recognize, perceive, and be acquainted with Him], but deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do. . ." Titus 1:16 Back in Titus 1:11, "Their mouths must be stopped for they are mentally distressing and subverting whole families by teaching what they ought not to teach, for the purpose of getting base advantage and disreputable gain."

Mr. Matthews, the body count keeps rising as the people you were supposed to have helped nurture spiritually, for God, continue to step forward. I know of three marriages that have been destroyed and three failed suicide attempts. This carnage of God's people is a direct result of your ministry and its perverted teachings. Your actions and teachings do have consequences! As do mine.

Mr. Beirute, if your law firm is not a part of this fraud, I can only assume that Mr. Matthews has failed to follow your legal advice. For example, the meeting of July 11, 1995 in which you suppose the members disenfranchised themselves to Mr. Matthews and his board was a special meeting of the members called by Mr. Matthews. I note that Minnesota law does require that the content of any special meeting be fully disclosed to all members a minimum of five days prior to such a meeting. Mr. Matthews would not tell us what the subject of the meeting was prior to it. I was there! Therefore, under Minnesota law "... business is void unless all members have waived notice."

I would also ask you, Mr. Beirute, if you would argue in a court of law that the "board" of this Minnesota Non-Profit corporation has the right to disenfranchise the corporations' members. Would you? I don't think so. Yet, that is exactly what has happened. The congregation was misled and lied to. In fact, the change to the by-laws that eliminated the Assembly of God was made based upon the lie that the Assembly of God may imminently seize church property. This was deception and fraud. Again, I know. I was there! Under Minnesota's Fraudulent Conveyances Act, it must be restored to the AG. The only question Mr. Matthews has to ask himself is exactly when. Not if!

Should this matter go into state court, Mr. Matthews, you can rest assured that all church documents will be poured over in detail by Minnesota government attorneys. Especially the financial records which you consistently withheld from the members of the congregation. A 24-36 month timeline of all your actions will be reconstructed by the attorneys and then correlated with all of your travel, other documents, tapes, etc. I will provide the information that I have collected and analyzed. Together, this information will provide conclusive proof that you have indeed committed fraud. If it doesn't happen in a criminal courtroom, you can rest assured it may then proceed on to a civil courtroom. In this process, everyone gets fully exposed.

This is not all that bad since God will be glorified in the end and we all know that His Word says so: "But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him]." (John 3:21) I am very "at peace" in bringing this matter fully into God's Light and before the general public's eye. God demands righteousness! James 4:17. It is God whom I answer to. I am not intimidated by you, Mr. Matthews, or your Tulsa law firm.

Would the AFCM want a church where deception was deployed to disenfranchise its members? I don't think so. This is not of God. I am comfortable that neither Jim Kaseman's AFCM Ministries nor Mac Hammond Ministries had any knowledge of your actions. These are ministries of God whom you chose to involve and "use" to accomplish your fraud. This is your own deception.

Bill, you need help and counseling to restore yourself back to HIM. God did have great plans for your life, but somewhere along His path -- you got lost. And, you took your entire family in the wrong direction. However, there is no need for you to also drag your family through a state criminal fraud investigation. Or, for that matter, even a civil fraud investigation. Or, worse yet, maybe even both. **The best thing for all parties involved is that you surrender Solid Rock Church back to its members and the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God Ministries by June 30.**

God says that there is nothing else that you can do that will stop this process from going forward into the court system. Not even a personal law suit against me. After June 30, it will be in the hands of state attorneys who will view your actions without mercy. If you plan on paying lawyer fees, then you should save your resources to defend yourself in criminal court. Although you may feel anointed Bill, HIS message to you is that HE does not anoint people to lie, deceive and abuse people. Nor to steal His property by swindle. Nor to "possess" His property as your own inheritance.

In contrast, if you return the church and its property back to the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God Ministries as HE wants prior to June 30th, I will cease all further activities. No more ads. No more flyers. No more ministries being advised of your false teachings. No forthcoming PR campaign and Internet cult site. And, of course, I will not file the two criminal fraud complaints as is planned. Its that simple. I will assume, at that point, that you will proceed also with counseling for both yourself and your family.

Since I have yet to see any evidence of a desire to resolve this issue, I will proceed on. Eventually, the situation will be resolved. I am willing to stand under the public's intense microscope for HIS righteousness. You can count on it!

IT'S EASY TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE

Just have the Minnesota District Council of Assemblies of God Ministries notify me and advise me that they have received the church and all of its property back prior to 11:00 a.m. on June 30. I will then cease all activities regarding this matter. Remember, after this date, it is in the states' hands. "So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17.

Bill, it is not too late to reconcile yourself with God concerning this matter. **It is your decision!**

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward G. Palmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Edward G. Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

cc: Mac Hammond Ministries
Jim Kaseman Ministries & AFCM
Assembly of God Minnesota District
Don Heinzman, Elk River Star News
Martha Allen, Minneapolis StarTribune
Bill King, Associate Pastor
Bill, Sr. & Betty Matthews

Exhibit "A"

7/11/95 7pm
Business MTG

GO / 5 / 1
FOR / NB / ABSTAIN

Resolution to the By-laws

Solid Rock Church

Whereas, **Solid Rock Church** has been experiencing a powerful move of God accompanied with signs, wonders and manifestations of the Holy Spirit for over two years; and
Whereas, this move has been going on long enough to see that the fruit is a greater love for Jesus, a greater love for the Word, a greater love for others and a greater desire to see people won to Christ; and
Whereas, the Assemblies of God, MN District has issued, endorsed, and sent out to all credentialed ministers an 85-page paper which strongly questions the validity of the move of God that our body is certain to be of God; and
Whereas, there are many fine denominations and organizations such as the Baptists and Nazarenes which have contributed much to the body of Christ at large but have rejected certain parts of the revelation of God's Word that others receive and walk in; and
Whereas, although we love all people in the body of Christ and respect their beliefs we must align ourselves most closely with those who share the same understanding on God's Word and His activities on the earth today through the person of the Holy Spirit as we have; and
Whereas, we believe that to continue to affiliate ourselves with the Assemblies of God, MN District could cause division and strife within the denomination seeing the differences in belief they have made evident; and
Whereas, we desire to walk in peace and love with our brothers and sisters in the Assemblies of God but find ourselves at an impasse in continuing the vision God has called us to while at the same time being in total agreement with leadership over us;
Whereas, we do believe in submission and accountability to brothers and sisters in the faith and are not acting out of rebellion but out of the best interests of all parties involved; therefore be it Resolved that **Solid Rock Church** disaffiliate from the Assemblies of God, MN District and affiliate with AFCM (Association of Faith, Churches & Ministries) under the leadership of Jim Caseman; and
Be it further Resolved that the Pastor and deacons make up a committee to make appropriate changes in the Constitution and By-laws to present to the congregation at a later date. *

Appendix B

On June 30, 1997 the following “Petition To Investigate Fraud” was filed with both the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office and the Sherburne County Attorney’s Office. In addition, this entire report and petition has been supplied to the Elk River Star News, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, and the Minnesota Christian Chronicle. Did he get away with the fraud? In time, we will see what God has planned for all of those concerned.

Hubert H. Humphrey, III
Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
102 State Capitol
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

June 30, 1997

Dear Mr. Humphrey:

By way of this letter and the attached "Petition To Investigate Fraud," I am requesting that Bill Matthews, senior pastor at Elk River's Solid Rock Church, be immediately investigated for fraud. The petition is self explanatory.

The fraud petition focuses specifically on the illegal actions of a corporate officer (Bill Matthews) in a non-profit Minnesota corporation. His actions disenfranchised the corporation's members and fraudulently conveyed all corporate property (estimated at \$3-5 Million) illegally into his family's sole control.

From my perspective, the facts can easily be verified from the corporate records or lack thereof at Solid Rock Church, Inc. As you know, corporations exist on paper and all actions of the officers, directors and shareholders (members) need to be documented in accordance with law.

Please advise me if you need any further assistance. You can contact me at 441-3440 or by fax at 441-7174. This request has also been sent to the Sherburne County Attorney's Office.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward G. Palmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Edward G. Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

Walter Kaminsky
Sherburne County Attorney
Sherburne County Government Center
13880 Highway 10
Elk River, Minnesota 55330

June 30, 1997

Dear Mr. Kaminsky:

By way of this letter and the attached "Petition To Investigate Fraud," I am requesting that Bill Matthews, senior pastor at Elk River's Solid Rock Church, be immediately investigated for fraud. The petition is self explanatory.

The fraud petition focuses specifically on the illegal actions of a corporate officer (Bill Matthews) in a non-profit Minnesota corporation. His actions disenfranchised the corporation's members and fraudulently conveyed all corporate property (estimated at \$3-5 Million) illegally into his family's sole control.

From my perspective, the facts can easily be verified from the corporate records or lack thereof at Solid Rock Church, Inc. As you know, corporations exist on paper and all actions of the officers, directors and shareholders (members) need to be documented in accordance with law.

Please advise me if you need any further assistance. You can contact me at 441-3440 or by fax at 441-7174. This request has also been sent to the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward G. Palmer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Edward G. Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

Petition To Investigate Fraud

June 27, 1997

Whereas Solid Rock Church of Elk River, Minnesota was formerly Elk River Assembly of God which was created and formed under the laws of the State of Minnesota as a Non-Profit Minnesota Corporation fully subject to Minnesota Statute 317A and other Minnesota laws; and,

Whereas said corporation's individual members fully enjoyed all of the rights granted under the authority of said Minnesota laws including the right to "one member one vote" in accordance with Minnesota Statute 317A.441 and certain other rights listed under Minnesota laws; and,

Whereas said members built up the ministry of this non-profit corporation through their own personal sacrifices of time, labor, money, love, etc. for religious purposes as an Assembly of God Ministry; and,

Whereas said corporations' real property has been identified by the City of Elk River as a piece of prime commercial real estate highly valued of which the commercial development thereof would be desirable since such real property within the city is extremely limited; and,

Whereas said real property of said non-profit corporation now includes several buildings, land and other property worth an estimated Three to Five Million dollars (\$3-\$5,000,000); and,

Whereas Bill Matthews was a candidate for senior pastor of Elk River Assembly of God during the fall of 1992 and at a subsequent vote of the members he was accepted as senior pastor; and,

Whereas the corporation was then supervised by a group of five or more elders in accordance with Titus 1:5 whereby said elders were overseers and functioned as the board of directors holding the pastor accountable to the members of this non-profit religious corporation; and,

Whereas the elders have been dropped and all members' rights granted under Minnesota law have been subverted and taken away by the personage of Bill Matthews et al during 1996 in what could only be described as the systematic and methodical stealing of the church and its property away from the members of this non-profit corporation; and,

Whereas a report entitled "Godly Wisdom, Spiritual Abuse or Cult?" hereinafter "the report" has been written to document the fraud and false teachings of Bill Matthews and is attached hereto as "Exhibit 1" and is referenced herein by brackets with page number references where it is deemed to be appropriate to point out additional or supporting information [p#]; and,

Whereas the report documents certain cult techniques including deception, lies and other methods [p15, 54-57] that were used in taking away said members' property and rights; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away occurred during September of 1994 when Bill Matthews initiated and caused the by-laws and articles to be altered in such manner that removed all credential requirements of the corporation; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away occurred soon after the altering of the by-laws and articles when a certain significant group of members exceeding 15% of the membership felt that they had no recourse but to leave the corporation and were denied their rights (by Bill Matthews et al) under Minnesota Statute 317A to properly address the entire membership in discourse said group thereafter forming a new non-profit corporation called “Grace Assembly of God” now located within Elk River; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away occurred during July of 1995 when Bill Matthews deceived the membership by falsely stating that the Minnesota District Assembly of God Ministries may imminently seize all church property because of the split in membership that previously occurred said seized property which would then be given to Grace Assembly of God Church; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away was when Bill Matthews caused the articles of the corporation to be modified in such manner that eliminated the Minnesota District Council of Assembly of God Ministries from arbitrating any splits within the congregation said provision granting certain rights to the Minnesota District of Assembly of God Ministries said altering of articles being done without the District Assembly of God Council being allowed to participate in and leading to a subsequent lawsuit; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away occurred throughout 1995 and 1996 as Bill Matthews dealt falsely and in a misleading way with the Minnesota District Assembly of God Ministries whom had initiated a lawsuit against Bill Matthews’ Ministry when the articles were modified without their participation said dealings of Matthews designed to isolate the Minnesota District from its members and paint a different picture of the members of the congregation than that which actually existed; and,

Whereas the isolation of the Minnesota District Council of the Assembly of God Ministries that led to an out of court settlement with Bill Matthews during September-October 1996 was certainly based upon fraud and deception; and,

Whereas under Minnesota’s Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act at Chapter 513 said out of court settlement should be considered null and void in that it involved the fraudulent conveyance of real property estimated to be worth several million dollars or an interest therein; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away was the “special meeting” of July 11, 1995 called by Bill Matthews in which he would not disclose the contents of prior to said meeting; and,

Whereas failure to disclose the contents of a “special meeting” a minimum of five days prior to the meeting to all members is a violation of Minnesota Statute 317A.433 Subd 4; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away occurred on July 11, 1995 when Bill Matthews caused to be initiated and passed a switch of affiliations from the Minnesota District Council of the Assembly of God Ministries to the AFCM Ministries (Association of Faith Church Ministries) said switch of affiliations being used as a ruse to disenfranchise the members and eliminate all congregational or membership voting rights; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews failed to obtain the waiver of this special meeting from all members which is a requirement of Minnesota Statute 317A.435 the lack thereof voiding all business transacted at this meeting thereby voiding the switch of affiliations to the AFCM; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the property and rights away from the members was to consistently deny the members their rights to proper notice under Minnesota Statute 317A.435 said proper notice was not provided by Bill Matthews in all of the meetings he held from January 1994 through December 1996; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away was the “special meeting” of September 12, 1996 called by Bill Matthews to reaffirm the switch of affiliations that presumably occurred on July 11, 1995 in which the meeting notice again failed to disclose the contents (which was, in fact, a disenfranchisement of the membership); and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away was the resolution that was adopted contrary to Minnesota law (in violation of MSA 317A.433, 435) on July 11, 1995 said resolution shown in the report [p 75] and designed specifically to deceive the congregation; and,

Whereas one of the steps in subverting the members rights away was the violation by Bill Matthews of the corporations’ Article XV which requires that any amendments to the Articles be posted in a conspicuous place for four consecutive Sundays and that due notice be given to the members; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews failed to disclose in any form whatsoever to the members of the corporation that a vote to affiliate with the AFCM was a vote to disenfranchise all members except “Bill Matthews and his board” said lack of disclosure being intentional; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews failed to disclose in any form whatsoever to the members of the corporation that a vote to affiliate with the AFCM was a vote to concentrate all power in the hands of “Bill Matthews and his board” said lack of disclosure being intentional; and,

Whereas the resolution [p75] the members voted on July 11, 1995 did not modify the articles and by-laws but only authorized a committee to be formed to determine what changes would be required which were then suppose to be presented to the congregation at a later date; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews’ attorneys have asserted that the passage of this single resolution [p75] on July 11, 1995 was legal and removed all member voting rights (a member disenfranchisement and fraudulent conveyance of real property) per their letter in the report [p68-69]; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews and his committee members or board members have no authority to disenfranchise the members of this non-profit Minnesota corporation; and,

Whereas Bill Matthew et al made it a common practice to isolate people individually and impose a “can’t talk rule” so that his cult practices would not become common knowledge; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews in order to gain control over the membership made false accusations against the members and made it his practice to ostracize any member who disagreed with his actions thereby eliminating any dissenting opinions or honest membership discourse; and,

Whereas the cumulative result of Bill Matthews et al actions appears to encompass a plan that fraudulently conveyed real property or an interest therein and that dispersed from Solid Rock Church an estimated 400-600 people many whom were members of the congregation; and,

Whereas many of these dispersed members of the congregation were mightily deceived and disenfranchised of their property interests and other rights by Bill Matthews et al; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews consistently withheld financial information so that the average regular attending members were not aware of weekly or monthly offerings and expenses; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews has an estimated twenty years of ministry experience in dealing with non-profit corporations and is fully knowledgeable with the issues of members’ rights and was willfully negligent therefore in his fiduciary and other responsibilities to protect those rights; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews was counseled by the Tulsa, Oklahoma based law firm of Winters, King & Associates, Inc. concerning these matters and has used this law firm to justify and rationalize his corporate actions in Minnesota as being legal [p68-69]; and,

Whereas it is highly unlikely that Bill Matthews, without some assistance from others, could have been successful in subverting the property and rights away from said members; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews has consistently fired staff and then replaced them with either family members or other non credentialed individuals in order to consolidate his control over the corporation said actions designed to convert the members’ property and rights away from them and into “a family run business” controlled exclusively by Bill Matthews; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews sent the AFCM a corporate resolution withdrawing Solid Rock Church from its affiliation on November 7, 1996 [p27-28] a mere 58 days after the members presumably reaffirmed its resolution to affiliate on September 12, 1996 and immediately after the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God Ministries dropped their lawsuit said resolution documenting Bill Matthews et al conversion of real property away from the members; and,

Whereas Bill Matthews during 1996 appointed his wife Mary Matthews as a co-pastor and then -- soon after the AFCM disaffiliation resolution he sent on November 7, 1996 [p27-28] -- he ordained his young son Bill Matthews, Jr. (age 19-20) and one of his daughters Rachel as ministers of this non-profit corporation (church); and,

Whereas all property and authority in this Minnesota non-profit corporation currently resides solely with “Bill Matthews and his board” according to his Tulsa, Oklahoma based attorneys [p68-69] indicating that he has successfully stolen the property away from the founders and other members of this Minnesota non-profit corporation which did disenfranchise the members and the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God Ministries in the process and did place all corporation property under the firm control of his family; and,

Whereas the essence of the above actions by Bill Matthews et al soundly appears to be illegal under Minnesota’s Non-Profit Corporation Act and other Minnesota laws; and,

Whereas said actions appear to constitute fraud; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Minnesota State Attorney General’s Office use his remedial powers under Minnesota Statute 317A.813 (& other powers) and that the Sherburne County Attorney’s Office working in conjunction with the State Attorney General initiate and conduct a thorough and intensive fraud investigation of Bill Matthews and his ministry located at Solid Rock Church, 11800 196th Avenue NW, Elk River, Minnesota 55330; **be it further**

RESOLVED that said fraud investigation determine the entire extent to which the corporations’ property and members’ rights were subverted and transferred out of the members’ control, the individuals that were responsible for this fraudulent conversion of real property and to whom or where said real property and rights therein were transferred to; **be it further**

RESOLVED that said non-profit corporation’s property be then returned in its entirety to its members and the Minnesota District Assemblies of God Ministries. That a date preceding any action of Bill Matthews be established for recreating a membership list that is untainted by the actions of Bill Matthews et al. That said members on said membership list be notified and gathered together for the forming of a new organization or a reconstituting of the old organization so that the furtherance of this ministry for God may be enabled; **be it further**

RESOLVED that the state seek relief at law and in equity and in whatever else is deemed just.

I attest that the issues presented herein represent the truth as I know it to be. That I attended this ministry (Elk River Assembly of God and then Solid Rock Church) from the period of time from July 26, 1992 through and inclusive of November 20, 1996 and that I bear witness along with others to the above actions. Further, I attest that I was a member of this non-profit corporation (church) from July 14, 1993 through December 23, 1996.

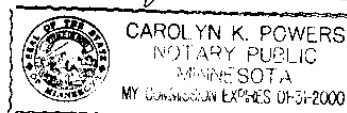
Your Petitioner,

Edward G. Palmer

Edward G. Palmer
15548 95th Circle NE
Otsego, Minnesota 55330

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this
June 27, 1997 by Edward G. Palmer who is known to me.

Carolyn K. Powers
Seal



627-96

June 27, 1997

Petition To Investigate Fraud: Page 5 of 5

Appendix C

Is there a big message from God? To all of those involved? Even a message to all believers worldwide? Yes, I believe I have heard this message of HIS loud and clear. It is a message to all of us who would call ourselves a Christian; a follower of Jesus. It is a message to believers. To those who are the children of God. It is HIS way of confirming this sole desire of our hearts. To simply live our lives for HIM! Are you a child of God? Really?

God's Final Word

Who is your brother?

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother . . .” Matthew 12:50 NIV

“Whoever does God's will is my brother . . .” Mark 3:35

Stay away from false brothers!

“But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone **who calls himself a brother but is . . . greedy, . . . a swindler**. With such a man do not even eat.” 1 Corinthians 5:11

Definition of a swindler according to the American Heritage Dictionary

1. To cheat or defraud of money or property.
2. To obtain by fraudulent means.

—intr.

1. To practice fraud as a means of obtaining money or property.

Who are the children of God?

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God . . .” 1 John 3:10 NIV

What's His Message?

Christians need to do the right thing. If they turn their backs and say to themselves: “I don’t want to get involved.” -- then they are doing the “worldly” thing. They are not in God’s will. In fact, 1 John 3:10 states that if you do not do the right thing -- you are not a child of God. Those who call themselves Christian need to stand up for righteousness. Otherwise, they may find Jesus saying to them: “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and driven out demons in Your Name and done many mighty works in Your name? And then I will say to them openly (publicly), I never knew you; depart from ME, you who act wickedly [disregarding My commands]” Matthew 7:21-23 Amplified Also, God states: “you will fully know them by their fruits.” v20

Stay in HIS Holy Word -- the Bible. And, remember this: “For [the Spirit which] you have now received [is] not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage . . .” Romans 8:15