

SUMMARY OF THE AKERILL REPORT

- 1. Modern Churchianity requires Christians to disobey the Bible in how they handle their giving.**
- 2. Pastors are frequently poor because churches do not provide the resources for them to do their job, which leads them to feelings of isolation and despair.**
- 3. The corporate policy of Village Missions, the organization with which both the Akerills and the Tensed Church are affiliated, is unscriptural, unjust, and contrary to business ethics.**
- 4. The Church Board for the Tensed Church unjustly opposed the Akerills' philosophy of ministry.**
- 5. Village Missions and the Church Board have failed to prove that the Akerills' did anything which was unscriptural, unjust, or contrary to business ethics.**
- 6. The punishment meted out to the Akerills by both Village Missions and the Church Board violated the standards of God's Word and their own respective governing documents.**
- 7. Village Missions and the Church Board are false accusers and ought to be themselves the subjects of Church discipline.**

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REPORT ON THE AKERILL MATTER

1. Modern Churchianity requires Christians to disobey the Bible in how they handle their money.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.

- Matthew 6:3

God's Word requires that His people pay tithes and offerings. This is one of the ways that a redeemed people show their gratitude to God and finance His work in the earth. Because they are required, it is appropriate to refer to them as God's taxes.

The recipient of the tithes and offerings has changed over the years. At one time, they were paid to the Old Testament priests and Levites. In New Testament times, they were paid presumably to the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors (Ephesians 4:11-12). In the Early Church, they were paid to the bishops of the local churches, who were considered the successors of the apostles (Didache 15:1-2). In modern times, the local pastor is generally looked upon as the church's spiritual leader and a successor to the apostles as a representative of Christ to the community. For this reason, he is considered as the primary recipient of the tithes and offerings.

The first striking contrast between the standards of God's Word and the practice of modern Churchianity is that of accountability. In the Bible, while the tithe is required, there is no provision for recording it. There were no reports, no bookkeepers, and no records.

Now, Israel was not so backward that it did not know how to engage in commerce. There was bookkeeping for private business. We have archeological evidence to show that ancient Israel was a sophisticated culture in terms of trade, business, and property. **It's just that when it came to the Lord's work, no records were kept.**

To explain this anomaly, recall that the numbering of the people – that is, taking a census of the population - was forbidden to Israel's leaders (Exodus 30:12; 2 Samuel 24:2; 1 Chronicles 21:1). The violation of this obscure law was considered an infringement on God's sovereignty. This fact may explain why there was no record keeping of the tithes and offerings paid to God. God reserved to Himself the prerogative of enforcing this law and punishing those who disobeyed. Only He has the omniscience to know whether the worshipper has cheated Him or not and to judge justly.

As one Bible scholar of the Reformed tradition has explained it,

Scripture is silent in regard to which human agency has the power to force payment of God's Levitical or Social taxes. It is silent in this regard, because Scripture does not acknowledge any human agency has such power. The Word of God does not give any human agency the power to force compliance to God's laws of taxation, because whoever claims such power is virtually claiming to be as God on earth.

- Tithing & Dominion, R. J. Rushdoony, p. 135

Had God left to man the responsibility of recording and enforcing these laws, it would have led to deception, statistical trickery, and fraud. Human authorities would have had to make frequent inspections of a man's property, his harvests, and his books to determine whether the tithes were accurately paid. In other words, it would have produced a bureaucracy and all the evils associated with it that we see today. God never intended for human authorities to have this kind of power; for it leads to tyranny.

During the time of Christ, the practice of keeping track of tithes and offerings was blasted by Him in numerous rebukes. His discourse on almsgiving in the Sermon on the Mount is an example of His teachings, where He taught us to do it in secret (Matthew 6:4). In His day, the Pharisees were trafficking in religion. That is why He overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple. Remember, He often directed His rebukes to "the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 23). **The scribes were bookkeepers.**

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe . . .
And have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment,
Mercy and faith:*

v. 23

But that was not all. The Pharisees measured their worth according to a merit/demerit system. It was a works religion in which everything was reduced to a monetary valuation. Their pompous displays at the Temple treasury were done to make sure their giving was properly recorded and publicized. Jesus commanded His disciples not to let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. In other words, **Jesus did not want His people to keep monetary records for the Church.** And thus, in the earliest Church we do not find church clerks which kept track of these things.

As we approach the Middle Ages, however, the Church had become closely aligned with the State. The records of Church finances became a State concern and the Church leadership found a new way of generating income: penance and indulgences.

The Bible teaches the principle of restitution and the doctrine of penance began as a valid form of restitution. But over time, the merit/demerit idea overtook Christian theology. Sin became viewed as a debit requiring a credit to balance it out if the believer ever hoped to make it to Heaven. Thus, a new works religion emerged in the Church which provided a way for people to buy their way into Heaven.

Indulgences were worse and finally led to Martin Luther's revolt against the Church. Indulgences were like vouchers that could be bought to excuse the sinner for the sins which he might be contemplating in the future. It produced widespread corruption as murderers, rapists, and all kinds of criminals paid for their sins in advance and received absolution before ever committing them!

The Protestant Reformers continuously resisted the notion of works religion and sought the simplicity of the New Testament Church. Tithes and offerings were paid directly to their spiritual leaders without fanfare and without records being kept. That practice continued until the 20th Century, when once again, charitable giving became a State concern.

With the passage of the federal income tax and tax deductions for charitable giving, churches sought to encourage giving by acquiring tax exempt status. Once again, the scribe appeared in the church. No longer a gift of love and gratitude, the tithes and offerings became a calculated economic decision. The Church became a business and most churches incorporated themselves so that they could be run like businesses. And thus, we have the modern spectacle of Churchianity trafficking for gain in the name of Christ.

2. Pastors are frequently poor because churches do not provide the resources for them to do their jobs.

*Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel
should live of the gospel.*

- 1 Corinthians 9:14

Since churches are now run like businesses, every financial transaction must be calculated for profitability. This often runs contrary to the Biblical standard for the pastoral ministry.

The pastor is a shepherd and is required to take imprudent economic risks in the name of love. Jesus tells us that the Good Shepherd will leave the 99 sheep to find the single one that is lost. This runs contrary to economic sense. How can a sensible shepherd risk the loss of the entire flock in order to save the one? What if the 99 are attacked by wolves or stolen by thieves in his absence? The Pharisee and churchist will say such an act is foolish. They would say the lost sheep should be written of as an economic loss by the shepherd and that he should protect what has left.

Our Lord tells us otherwise. He tells us that God's providential care will reward love and generosity, even if it requires seemingly foolish risks. The Lord broke many human traditions in the name of love.

The work of the pastor today is usually under-funded. Church boards are often stingy. They are hostile to the notion of helping bums, drop-outs, and other misfits in society. While a pastor will see the sinner's potential if shown the love of God, Church boards usually want to see proof that an individual is worth the investment of time and resources. This is the folly of Church boards and all middle men which stand between the ministry and the givers which support the ministry. They represent the modern bureaucratic philosophy which separates ownership from management. Ostensibly created to minimize personal risk, it results lay-offs and plant closings in the name of efficiency. They call it "down-sizing", yet it destroys people's lives.

As for the church, the pastor is required to make huge personal sacrifices in terms of time and finances to hide the cold-heartedness of churchists from the people he is trying to help. If he tries to make-up the financial shortfall with odd jobs or other secular employment, he is often criticized for sacrificing his spiritual calling, even though the Apostle Paul plied his trade as a tentmaker to provide for himself and others (Acts 18:3; 20:33-34). The churchist believes the pastor's poverty is necessary to his holiness, but really it is proof of the churchist's corrupt heart.

3. The corporate policy of Village Missions, the organization with which both the Akerills and the Tensed Church are affiliated, is unscriptural, unjust, and contrary to business ethics.

Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?

- 1 Corinthians 9:7

Village Missions, Inc. is an organization designed to facilitate the transfer of funds from donors to worthy ministers which they sponsor as missionaries to poor rural churches. We are told that many churches would not have a minister at all were it not for the assistance of Village Missions.

In this respect, it must be understood that Village Missions is acting as a middle man and a bookkeeper. Theoretically, prospective missionaries can raise their own funds from donors who will pledge support on a regular basis and thus bypass the middle man. And this very process of soliciting sponsors is required of candidates to become Village Missionaries. What often happens, however, is that the zeal of donors begins to wane over time and support diminishes. At this point, Village Missions insures a continuity of support until the missionary can go out and raise new pledges.

However meritorious this arrangement may seem, it must be regarded as one which has no Biblical precedent. Indeed, in its clerical role, Village Missions is doing the work of a scribe, which in the light of what was discussed above in point #1; its right to even exist is called into question.

Now, Village Missions claims to be an interdenominational organization; yet contrary to that claim, it has a supervisory ministry of representatives for geographical districts. In these respective districts, local VM pastors must send monthly reports describing their ministerial activities: the number of meetings held, how many were in attendance, what was the nature of the meetings, what were the results, how much money was raised, etc. – all typical practices of hierarchical churches. In addition to these reports, the ministers and the churches which they serve must send tithes to the corporate office and participate in the various fund-raising programs which the organization promotes from time-to-time.

Additionally, Village Missions apparently claims the right to dismiss a pastor at any time and for any reason. The dismissal of the Akerills from the Tensed Community Church proceeded exactly in such a manner. The Church Board professed to be powerless to influence the outcome. This power is essential to all hierarchical churches.

While various aspects of Village Missions might be scrutinized, there is at least one corporate policy which is unscriptural, unjust, and contrary to business ethics. It has direct bearing on the handling of the Akerill matter: its policy on reimbursements. This will require a little background information.

The process has been explained to us this way:

Of the monies received by the Church during the course of a month, a tithe is paid from the top, before any other disbursements are made. Since the Tensed Church's monthly budget appears to have averaged \$2500 per month, this would mean approximately \$250 - a tenth - was sent to Village Missions.

After the tithe, the Church paid its bills resulting from various expenses accumulated during the month from operating the Church. It ought to be added that the Church is also required to pay a monthly premium for the minister's health insurance, which is reported to be approximately \$600.

After expenses, if there is any money left over, the Church pays it to the minister. If that amount falls short of the \$1400 stipulated as a salary for the minister, then Village Missions sends back the sum necessary to make up for the shortfall.

After the minister receives his check(s) totaling \$1400, he is then required to pay a tithe also to Village Missions, which would amount to \$140 per month.

It is not clear what happens if the Church is not able to pay its routine expenses, such as: utilities, heating, upkeep and so forth. From one informant, we are told that Village Missions will guarantee that the doors are kept open. But we have not received confirmation of that fact from Village Missions representatives.

When a Church falters financially, the minister will often step in with his limited finances to make up the difference. Sometimes, ministers will be reimbursed by the church; sometimes not. In the case of Village Missions, should the minister elect to help the Church financially, there is no distinction which it provides between reimbursements and amounts paid for salary to the minister. So even if the Church reimburses the minister, *it must be counted with his salary*.

(As unbelievable as this may seem, it is true and can be confirmed from correspondence received from the Director of Village Missions.)

For example, suppose the minister pays the phone bill for the Church. Let's say it is \$100. Suppose the Church reimburses him for it the following month. That \$100 must be reported as part of the salary paid by the Church.

Let's suppose the Church paid \$400 toward his salary plus the \$100 reimbursement. That would be reported to Village Missions as \$500, meaning that VM would pay the minister \$900 and not the \$1000 that justice would require. So in real terms, the minister's salary for the month would be \$1300 and not the \$1400 which he is guaranteed.

Theoretically, if the minister used his entire salary of \$1400 during one month to pay the bills for the Church and if it was reimbursed to him by the Church the following

month, Village Missions would require that it be reported as salary; in which case, VM would send nothing. So in real terms, the monthly salary for the minister during those two months would be \$700 for each month.

It should be added that if the minister does not report the reimbursement as his salary, then presumably – as we now know - Village Missions considers the minister to be defrauding the organization and committing an act of embezzlement.

This ridiculous practice is unscriptural as indicated by the passage in 1 Corinthians quoted above. No principal sends an agent without providing the resources to cover expenses for the venture. It violates common sense of justice. If an agent must bear the risks and expenses of a venture, then he is a partner and not an agent. Partners share the risk of loss, bear in common the expenses, and jointly receive the profits. In this case, Village Missions expects its agents to bear the risks of a partner but not share in the rewards. The minister is limited to his salary no matter how successful his ministry might be.

It could be interjected in VM's defense that its rules vary between self-supporting churches and non-self-supporting churches. We are not privy to the convoluted process which might cause it to waive its rules in one case and enforce them in another. But it does not change the injustice. If a man stops beating his wife after she loses enough weight to please him does that justify him? The law recognizes no such distinctions, nor does it do so in the relation between principals and agents. It remains public policy that,

For all expenses which the agent has necessarily incurred in the discharge of his duties as agent, on behalf of the principal, the agent is entitled to reimbursement from the principal.

- *American Law & Procedure*, Vol. 1 Ch. IV, Sec. 1, §49

This is in addition to his wages or salary §48 and any indemnities §50.

“Wages” shall not include sums which the employer has paid to the employee to cover any special expenses entailed on him by the nature of his employment.

- Idaho Statutes 72-102 (30)

It can be argued that the Akerills were entitled to reimbursement from Village Missions as an agent from his principal. Whether the Church made the reimbursements or not, it depended on whether there was an agreement to do so between it and VM.

4. The Church Board for the Tensed Church unjustly opposed the Akerills' philosophy of ministry.

*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor,
especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.*

- 1 Timothy 5:17

It ought to be common knowledge by now that members of the Church Board differed sharply with the Akerills' philosophy of ministry. In the first place it was Rev. Akerill's desire to be a true pastor of the whole community and he tried to participate as much as possible in the life of the Community of Tensed. As a part of this, he offered practical assistance to people to help them bear the burdens of life. In other words, he was a Good Samaritan.

Sometimes, on major projects which might involve substantial savings to the people he was helping, he might accept modest gratuities. For this he was sharply criticized and came under **investigation** as to whether these gifts were properly reported to Village Missions.

Again, this criticism is contrary to God's Word, which commands "thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" (Deuteronomy 25:4). The Apostle Paul uses that commandment in the context of the financial support of ministers (1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18). The idea behind it is the image of an ox that is turning a millstone. The ox's owner is commanded to let the ox eat freely of the grain which spills out of the grain pit as it is working. The owner may think he feeds the ox enough. He may have morning and evening feedings. It does not matter. God denies the owner total control over the ox's feeding by muzzling it. He allows the ox to be nourished as it works.

Likewise for ministers of the Gospel, salaries can be viewed as the regular feedings of the ox. But to limit the minister to his salary is the same as muzzling the ox. It prevents him from enjoying the blessings of God upon his labors which are reflected in the largesse of God's people in offerings and gifts. **We believe the practice of Village Missions for strict accounting of all monies which a minister receives from his congregation is unscriptural.** It might be complained such a position is an unreasonable standard. How else can Village Missions determine a fair amount to send? That is the dilemma which Village Missions faces: being reasonable or being Scriptural. If it cannot find a different way of determining its wage scale, then it must abandon it altogether.

This presents an irony. The Akerills were punished for failure to comply with an unscriptural practice. It does no good to say that the Akerills agreed to this policy. No agreement gives man the right to set aside the law of God. It is Phariseism, of which our Lord charged: "ye have made the Word of God of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:6).

It must not be forgotten that these personal sacrifices by Rob and Lori helped to build loyalty and good will in the Community which in turn translated itself into increased attendance and an enhanced reputation for the Church. In fact the Church was close to being recognized as a self-supporting church. And in a *de facto* sense the Church was self-supporting. It was apparently short the amount of its tithes which it paid to the corporate office.

Another point of sharp disagreement was Rev. Akerill's initiative to hold services at the Benewah hall on Sunday afternoons. This outreach was perceived in a threatening way by the Board, which regarded it as disloyalty.

There might be a list of sundry disagreements which could be listed. It is beyond the scope of this report, however, to do so. One is encouraged to consult with the Akerills for further information if it is desired. **These two examples are cited only to establish a probable cause for why the Board elected not to fight for their pastor when Village Missions decided on the Akerills' termination, since there were no minutes kept of their proceedings.**

In fact, contrary to their profession of love for the Akerills, members of the Church Board seemed to silence any public dissent and to express dismay at any attempts to exonerate them. Indeed, this very effort by the "Friends of the Akerills" has been branded as divisive and the secret initiative of some unchristian cult. Engaging in character assassination appears to be their special gift which we can only hope that decent people will turn away from in disgust.

5. Village Missions and the Church Board have failed to prove that the Akerills' did anything which was unscriptural, unjust, or contrary to business ethics.

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

- 1 Timothy 5:19

The reader does not have the benefit of past correspondence with the Board of Trustees of the Tensed Community Church and with Village Missions. For that reason, the following contains a summary of some of the points made in those letters and explains, in perhaps more understandable terms, the things that the Board has failed to grasp.

Indiscretions having to do with bookkeeping are usually and hopelessly complex. One cannot imagine a more tedious process. Not only must records be analyzed but they must be cross-referenced for errors and deceit. It used to be that college courses on accounting used a standard text entitled, "How to Lie with Statistics". How is it possible to lie with statistics when arithmetic is unyielding and unforgiving of errors?

The answer is in how you define the entries. Is the cup half full or is it half empty? If it is half full, you get a promotion. If it is half empty, you go to jail. That is how it works in the world of business.

There are three witnesses in this situation: a ledger sheet, a confession, and receipts. The ledger sheet has been provided by the President of the Church Board. It claims to contain the amounts listed in the Church ledger of the amounts paid by the Church to the Akerills and the amounts listed on the Akerills' reports. Almost all of the entries are different.

The receipts would be provided by the Akerills. The Akerills have claimed that \$100 a month can be accounted for as a general allowance by the church for professional expenses. The ledger reflects this practice from the very start.

Of the remainder amounts, they can be explained in part as either additional special expenses – which may or may not have been adequately recorded by receipts – or as arbitrary amounts estimated by Lori in an attempt to compensate for inadequate family finances or perceived injustices.

The third witness is Lori's public confession of wrongdoing.

To adequately assess the weight of this evidence, we must first remember that we live in a free country based upon Biblical principles. The Bible requires a thorough examination of the evidence before a decision is made to punish someone who has been accused of a sin or a crime. Both love and the law require that the accused be given the

benefit of the doubt until that examination is complete. It is not enough to say that the accused has confessed to the wrongdoing. Confessions can be obtained through torture and many other kinds of influences. In Lori Akerill's public confession to the Church/Community (anyone from the Community - whether believer or unbeliever - was allowed to attend the Sunday night meeting when this Confession occurred), the wrong she supposedly had done was never admitted in any of her statements. Even though she admitted that she did something wrong, there is nothing in the confession itself that admits to the charges of which she was accused.

While Lori declared that this Confession was being made of her own free will, the facts declare something different. Village Missions had set forth stipulations for the Akerills' restoration to affiliation and ministry in its organization. One of those stipulations required public confessions. The guilt which Lori bore for ruining her husband's career was a powerful motive to confess to anything. In this case, Lori groveled to please her superiors.

Thus, it is the view of this report that Lori Akerill's confession was obtained by coercive influences and is inadmissible for consideration in this discussion.

Second, as for the ledger sheet, to this day, it has not been presented for independent verification. Indeed, it has not been presented to the Akerills themselves. They have never received it or any other itemized claim - a bill, invoice, or statement - from Village Missions or from the Board of Trustees for the Tensed Community Church. While we might speculate on the motives for this negligence, it can only be interpreted as bad faith on their part which calls into question the validity of their claim. Christian charity, which is professed by all of these accusers, seems lacking in this simple task of accounting. If they truly love the Akerills as they claim, surely they would want a fair and accurate audit. The fact that they have failed to do so, after these many months, has destroyed any confidence we ought to have had in these organizations.

To the contrary, the evidence available to us points to a different conclusion and does not justify the accusations which were made against Lori. The accusations which were made were of a criminal nature: fraud, embezzlement, and so on. It has been stated from the beginning that the discrepancies between Lori's reports to Village Missions and the Church's reports can be explained by their differing rules for accounting reimbursements and expenses.

According to the Law of Agency, the Akerills' reports to Village Missions had the effect of being like invoices or bills for services rendered. **We should not expect that their reports would show the same amounts as those of the Church because the Akerills would have to take into account expenses and indemnities.** Lori did precisely what an agent would do according to business law. Whether she knew what she was doing or whether she did it out of frustration, anxiety over finances, or out of a sense of being cheated - it changes nothing. If she did it from selfish motives and doubt, perhaps it was a sin. But in the eyes of the law and business ethics, she acted within her

rights as an agent to her principal.

In addition to this we have the matter of ratification. According to the law of agency, the monthly reports would have been considered irrevocable once reviewed by the Akerills' superiors. Much like our bank statements, we have thirty days to review them and challenge any errors. After thirty days, the statement is considered ratified by our silence. One might justly wonder who was reviewing these reports or whether they were being reviewed at all. The fact that Village Missions waited four years to investigate clearly indicates either defective corporate policy or dereliction or both.

Now, Lori's reports differed from the reports of the Church on the average of \$250 per month. The claim is that she understated their income from the Church so that Village Missions would have to pay more than it should have, approximately \$250 per month. That might be true, but considering that Village Missions, according to the past history of the Church, would have had to pay much more were it not for the effectiveness of the Akerills' ministry, their superiors were probably elated at their success and were not much concerned about the niceties of accurate parsing of expenses and reimbursements.

We might be tempted also to say that this was a wash, as I indicated in an earlier letter to the Board, because the combined tithes of the Church and the Akerills - along with other donations - may have equaled or surpassed those amounts. But we will not know that for sure until the books are audited and exact figures are at our disposal.

Perhaps this illustration may help. Suppose that a person pledges \$20 a month to his church. Once a month, when the plate is passed around, the donor puts in his \$20 check and it is dutifully recorded by the church clerk. But let us suppose that the donor puts in his \$20 check and then makes change by taking out \$15 in cash. The clerk doesn't know this. He only sees the \$20 check and still records it as a fulfillment of the pledge. What has happened here?

Well, first of all the donor has deceived the church into thinking that he has paid his pledge when he really hasn't. Second, while he may have donated \$5, more than he would have had to give (he is not required to give anything); he did break a promise or a vow. The Scriptures plainly teach that breaking a vow is a serious sin. But it is not the same as a sin of outright theft, **and in the eyes of the law failure to pay a church pledge is not a criminal act.**

But suppose our donor friend who has pledged \$20 per month had already given in different ways that could not be recorded. Perhaps he offered gas from his gas can to fill-up the church lawn mower. Maybe he brought treats to the church nursery. He has no receipts but finds his fixed income will not allow any extra for the church. So he puts the check into the offering plate and takes out the \$15. Has he robbed God? Has he deceived the church? Do we want to get Pharisaical and split hairs here? Or do we want to say, "Look, brother, you're not going about this the right way, but it's ok. We love you and forgive you the burden of the pledge." We know he is an asset to the church.

We know he loves us. Why should we burden him with guilt and shame for messing up our books?

In Lori's case, we might say that misreporting monies received from the Church was like the donor who was giving some but not all the amounts he pledged to give. She was breaking a vow or a contractual relationship she had with Village Missions. But she was not stealing money or embezzling money.

With that in mind, let's look at the issue of expenses and reimbursements.

The Tensed Church is required to pay its bills before it pays its minister. Thus, if the monthly \$250 which Lori underreported had first been cycled through the Church Board as Church Expenses, no one would have raised an eyebrow. For in so doing, the Church would not have over-reported the Akerill income but would have properly designated these amounts as Church Expenses instead of as reimbursements to be tacked onto the salary reports.

The fuzzy area comes in deciding what are legitimate bills of the Church and what are bills which belong to the professional expenses of the minister. We can understand that the Church should pay its electric bill. It should pay the expenses for the maintenance of the parsonage.

But what happens if the minister cuts firewood and saves the Church \$500 in heating expenses? Should the Church simply ignore the minister's efforts and continue as if nothing ever happened? Should the Church buy the firewood from the minister? Should it continue to allocate the amount it normally would have paid and credit that amount to the minister for other expenses which he might have incurred? Should the Church rebuke the minister and report him to Village Missions for cutting firewood instead of studying his Sunday morning sermon?

If the Church elects to buy the firewood from the minister, will the sale be recorded as a part of the minister's salary? Yes, it will, according to the rules of Village Missions. (Actually, according to recent disclosures of policy, the minister risks being terminated by Village Missions for cutting the firewood).

What about the Church Bulletin? Is it a part of the Church expenses or the professional expenses of the minister? And who pays for it? For many of these kinds of questions, you may get a different opinion, depending upon whom you talk to.

In the light of this, it appears that honest differences of opinion existed between the Church Board, Village Missions, and the Akerills. Is the Church going to be less generous than Wal-Mart? Wal-Mart doesn't require receipts on returns. Aren't we really talking about bookkeeping technicalities, which we have already shown that Jesus hates anyway?

In the final analysis of this point, however, it is preposterous to assert that the Akerills ever unjustly enriched themselves at the expense of the Church or Village Missions. The scale of personal sacrifice by the Akerills for the success of this Church far exceeded the likely returns which Village Missions could have ever projected based upon the past history of the Tensed Church. It was coming within a whisper of being self-supporting and would have been a self-supporting Church today, were it not for the decisions which were so rashly made last November.

6. The punishment meted out to the Akerills by both Village Missions and the Church Board violated the standards of God's Word and their own respective governing documents.

*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him
His fault between thee and him alone . . .*

- Matthew 18:15

From the very beginning of the discovery of Lori Akerill's alleged misdeeds, the Akerills were cooperative and repentful. There was no sign of stubbornness or unwillingness to make right the wrong and to pay back every cent that was in arrears.

According to the Biblical standards quoted above, that is how it should have ended: as an arrangement between Village Missions and the Akerills to make good on the debt, with the knowledge of the Church Board for accountability and supervision.

As we now know, that is not how it was handled. The Akerills were fired from their post and they were excommunicated from the Church. Lori was subjected to repeated public humiliations and the family – during the Christmas season – was, literally, cast out into the streets with no place to go. Not only was this whole process violative of the Biblical concerns for compassion and restoration (Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20, etc.), **but it shocked the decency of even the unbelievers of our Community. Smug in its isolation, the Church has no idea how it has disgraced itself.**

The Akerills complained that the disciplinary process was in violation of Village Missions own minister's manual. We do not have a copy of this manual but have no reason to disbelieve the Akerills.

Certainly, the disciplinary process was in violation of the Constitution and By Laws of the Tensed Church. In Article 3, Section 3, it says,

CHURCH DISCIPLINE: If the Pastor or any member of the board or of the church is found to live or teach contrary to the Word of God and the statement of belief of this church he shall be admonished in love. If there is no repentance, exclusion from the church shall follow according to Matt. 18:15-18, 1 Cor. 5, 2 Cor. 2:5-11, Gal. 6:1-2.

This provision tells us that exclusion from the church must follow only if there is no repentance. We have already noted that Lori was in a state of repentance and was willing to prove that repentance with restitution.

Likewise with the termination of the minister, Article 8, Section 7 under "Recall of Pastor", it says,

- a. *All motions for the recall of the pastor shall be made to the general assembly by the board of trustees and voted on the following week.*
- b. *The pastor shall be recalled by a two-thirds majority vote of eligible members.*

Clearly, this process was not followed, which leads one to wonder if the termination is legally in force.

The Church Board has adopted the position that the Church's affiliation with Village Missions supercedes the Constitution and By-Laws. They use a single phrase from Section 3 which reads,

The Pastor shall be elected by a two-thirds majority vote of eligible members present except those furnished by Village Missions.

This is the only place in the entire document where Village Missions is mentioned.

To counter that argument we would say that such an interpretation does not follow sound logic and good English. There are seven sections in Article 8 pertaining to the Pastor. If the Constitution wanted us to apply this clause in Sec. 3 "except those furnished by Village Missions" to all seven sections, it would have included it in the Article's heading.

For instance, are we to assume that pastors from Village Missions are exempt from Section 1 which requires the pastor to read the Church's By-Laws? Are we to assume that a Village Missions pastor does not have the option to become a church member, as it says in Section 2? Are we to assume that Art. 7, Sec. 1 par. C. does not apply to VM pastors which requires his attendance at all meetings without the power to vote? If the testimony of Rob Akerill carries any weight, we would have to say that the Board is not consistent in its interpretation.

Indeed, when the representative of Village Missions gave notice to the Akerills that they had two days to clear the premises, the Church Board told the Akerills they had 30 days, pursuant of Section 8. How could they claim the power to do that if these provisions do not apply to VM ministers?

Sound use of the English language would tell us that the antecedent for Sec. 7 is not the previous Sections, but rather statements in the Article's heading. Logic would tell us that Sec. 3 has only to do with the selection of the pastor, not with his duties and not with his termination. Thus, whatever method is used to select the minister, it has no bearing on how he is terminated, *unless the Church has entered into a contractual relationship which supercedes this provision.*

But on two separate occasions, the President of the Board has denied that there is any such contract. If he has misled us and there is such an agreement, it has been kept a secret from the Church, and then it would be in violation of a different provision of the Constitution: Article 5 which prohibits the Church from forming an affiliation with a denomination without the consent of 95% of the members. As it was pointed out earlier, Village Missions has assumed in a *de facto* sense the role of a hierarchical church. Whether it formally claims to be a denomination or not is immaterial. The fact that important sections of the Church's Constitution and By-Laws can be set aside by this affiliation without a vote of the membership is enough to prove that just such a denominational relationship exists.

Thus, as things now stand, the Tensed Church is in an indefensible position. Either it must terminate its affiliation with Village Missions to be in compliance with Article 5, or it must present to the assembly a vote to terminate the Akerills position to be in compliance with Article 8.

7. Village Missions and the Church Board are false accusers and ought to be themselves the subjects of Church discipline.

*And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.
But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.*

- Luke 12:47-48

It has been argued by certain individuals that this whole tragedy is Lori Akerill's fault because it was her sin that started this whole process of discipline. Is that really true? Might we not argue that Village Missions' corrupt corporate policy is the culprit? Like any child finding cash on the roadside, Lori, in her immaturity simply followed the path of least resistance.

Furthermore, is not the abuse of authority the greatest enemy of authority? When our children have their hands in the cookie jar, do we maim them in punishment? They mock us with the claim that their organizations work like a family. Families which are abusive of each other are considered dysfunctional families. We view these organizations as dysfunctional and pious frauds.

It might be arguable that Lori Akerill abused her discretion as an agent to her principal in how she handled her reports. It might be arguable that in some sense she broke a pledge or a promise to follow – what this report considers to be - the convoluted bookkeeping rules of Village Missions. Did she commit embezzlement or fraud within the meaning of the law? Only a judge can decide that with any certainty, but in the opinion of this report, she did not.

In terms of sinful behavior, it might be argued that Lori was dishonest. For that, she certainly would be the appropriate subject of Church discipline. More importantly, however, the Lord may have allowed this calamity to come upon the Akerills to teach them the evils of Churchianity. They were all too eager to participate in the benefits of this pious fraud and she may have wounded others in her Pharisaical zeal. Only now are they learning a different path and it is hoped that they will have the integrity to embrace true Christianity.

But is that the real sin here? Is the real sin pertaining to how she handled her reports, or is the real sin in the lawless and vindictive manner of church discipline?

This report asserts that the real sin was the attack upon the spiritual life of the Body of Christ in this Community and in particular its local shepherd.

Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm.

- Psalm 105:15

This high-handed sin against the Lord's anointed was the real sin; for it has given occasion for the heathen to blaspheme the Lord (2 Samuel 12:14). Rob was a very successful representative of Christ to the Community. The intemperate desire of Village Missions and the Church Board to justify their decision to terminate and excommunicate the Akerills led them to put the Akerills before the public for humiliation and gossip on these exaggerated criminal charges. This decision, and this decision alone, is what has brought disgrace to the name of Christ in our Community.

Rob Akerill was the spiritual leader – and still is in our opinion – of the Tensed Church. Lori was his deaconess. The errors were committed by his subordinate. He should have had the opportunity to correct those errors. The fact that he was not allowed to do so by Village Missions indicates a proprietary claim by that organization to the pastoral ministry of the Tensed Church: to both the pastor and his wife. In other words, Village Missions claims the right – as we are informed by its attorney – to assign them anywhere at will and to terminate their assignments without any reason for which it can be held accountable by the local body. We say that the lack of accountability to the local body is also contempt for that body. Village Missions made a calculated business decision in its own corporate interests, and not one which reflected respect for the Body of Christ.

Therefore, in terms of culpability, the attack upon the spiritual life of our Community is that of Village Missions and Village Missions alone. And for that reason, its representatives ought to be forbidden any further operation in this Community. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. May their Sacraments be cursed,

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

-1 Corinthians 11:29

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

- 1 Corinthians 12:27

As for the Church Board, its sin was of a different nature. Because of personal biases, it failed to do what the Church's Constitution and By-Laws require them to

do. As soon as the Akerills' affiliation was terminated with Village Missions, it had the opportunity and duty to present the option of independency to the congregation.

It elected not to do so, but instead, acted as dutiful servants of Village Missions and was complicit in its sin. Their duty ought to be first to the Church, not to Village Missions.

Therefore, for this dereliction, they should resign, pending a fair and open review of their actions by the congregation.

Conclusion of Report