

NATION WITHOUT PITY

By Nancy Ross



THE FOUNDING OF ALAMO'S MINISTRY

In the early 1960s, Alamo and his late wife Susan, went out on the streets of Hollywood and West Hollywood, California and preached the Word of God to young street people, including drug addicts, alcoholics, criminals and prostitutes. They were the first of the "Jesus movement," and their street preaching attracted thousands. The Alamos' beliefs followed a strict adherence to the King James Version of the Bible, and were so popular that their first church was ironically a transformed former drug den in Hollywood. The ministry grew quickly, and soon moved to larger headquarters in West Hollywood and then to Saugus, California.

In the late 1970s, the ministry expanded to Georgia Ridge (near Fort Smith, Van Buren, Alma, and Dyer), Arkansas, where Susan Alamo was born. Soon ministries were founded

in Tennessee, Arizona, Florida, Oklahoma, and New York. They began modestly, by preparing meals, providing clothing and a place to sleep for their followers and anyone in need. As the congregation grew, they built housing for families, schools, nurseries, medical and recreational facilities. They developed workshops which provided job training for their followers, many of whom had never worked before. Through these workshops they opened a grocery store, restaurant, service station, hog farm, and trucking firm. They began manufacturing clothing, and Tony Alamo's fashions became a major success. His "glitzy" denim jackets were sold in department stores, in the most fashionable boutiques throughout the U.S. and Europe. The "Alamo of Nashville" store became world famous for its western, continental, and rock'n'roll fashions. Clothes were made

for Elvis Presley, Bruce Springsteen, James Brown, and countless others.

The church developed a complex social and religious environment, which one must understand to have an accurate assessment of its practices and mores. The church followed an orthodox fundamentalist tradition. Church followers lived in an extended community and dedicated their labor, money, and time to expand the church in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether a church member worked in a church-run workshop or in an outside job, salaries were contributed, and all personal necessities, all bills and expenses including housing, medical care, food, clothing, and schooling, were met by the church.

The primary commitment of church members was to spreading the gospel, winning new converts and building their

church—not in receiving high salaries. With every restaurant meal served, every gallon of gas pumped, every jacket sold, the customer was sure to receive a church brochure, and if they chose, be “witnessed” to.

Throughout the 1970s, Alamo and the church received strong praise from government officials and the media. In 1972, Herb Ellingswood, an aid to Governor Ronald Reagan came to the Saugus community to present a commendation from the government to Tony and Sue for their work. Press from throughout the world, including the French *Paris Match* and German *Der Stern*, wrote praises about Alamo and the church. Neil Young, for Warner Brothers, recorded the Holy Alamo Christian Choir singing the “Hallelujah Chorus” and the Alamo orchestra playing “King of Kings” for the motion picture “Journey Through the Past.”

THE CULT AWARENESS

NETWORK

SEES AN OPPORTUNITY

The church’s enormous growth and success also attracted the attention of the Cult Awareness Network (CAN). CAN has a significant ideological and financial interest in the destruction of churches and so-called “new religions” they unlawfully deem illegitimate, particularly those which demonstrate

success in attracting large numbers of converts among young people. CAN-related deprogrammers prey on the pain of families to convince them they can cure their child of their faith, which CAN terms “brainwashing.” These deprogrammers charge these parents tens of thousands of dollars, and use such “tactics” as kidnapping, coercion, and physical abuse. They subject them to sleep and food deprivation, humiliate and ridicule them, deprive them of privacy, and have even used sex—all to deprogram a “believer.”

CAN went after Mr. Alamo and his ministry in the worst tradition of the Salem witch hunts, the 19th century attacks on the Mormons, and other examples of religious intolerance. CAN’s campaign of demonization against Alamo lasted 25 years, during which they disseminated and distorted misleading interpretations of church practices and false information to the media, and instigated investigations by government agencies—from the Labor Department to the I.R.S.

Several qualified religious scholars have studied Alamo’s church, and have regarded it as a legitimate fundamentalist religion. However, these scholarly opinions have been drowned out by the “cult hysteria” whipped up and unlawfully manipulated by CAN. It is this latter interpretation that

has most influenced the media and the courts. Although the consensus of the psychology profession is that the concepts of “brainwashing” and “mind control” are entirely without scientific merit, the media adopted CAN’s allegations that Alamo “brainwashed” his congregation. CAN pseudo-psychologists recently lost a major lawsuit which has permanently ended their financially beneficial practice of testifying in court that so-called “cult leaders” could “brainwash” people to act against their will. But Tony Alamo was attacked before these theories were debunked, and these phony psychologists were allowed to peddle their bogus theories against Alamo in court. They portrayed him as having total control over his congregation, and compared church workshops to sweat shops whose workers were forced to hand over all their earnings to the Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation (TSAF). Thus the image of a “cult” leader was firmly ingrained in the public’s perception of Pastor Alamo; and once demonized with this label, Alamo, like the Branch Davidians, became less than human in their eyes. The successful and good work of the church, of helping people overcome crime, drug and alcohol problems, of providing stable livings and jobs, and of giving people faith in God and a reason to live, were completely ignored.

ALAMO'S TRIALS BEGIN

Between 1976 and 1994, Alamo faced a multitude of lawsuits, many of them fomented by CAN. In 1976, the U.S. Labor Department filed a lawsuit against the Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation (TSAF), alleging that it was subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and that its members had to be classified as employees rather than volunteers. Church members countered that they did not expect a salary per se. They were volunteers working for the Lord and the goals of the church, and were working to pay their own bills as well as church bills. The church provided them with housing, food, all their necessities, spending money, and they were using additional money to build homes for new followers and other community facilities. The case went to the Supreme Court, which ruled in 1985 that people working in church-related businesses were subject to the minimum wage and FLSA regulations.

In January of 1988, Tony Alamo was accused of child abuse, of allegedly directing—over the telephone—the beating of 11 year old Jeremiah Justin Miller. At the time, the child was at the center of a custody battle between his mother, a member of Alamo's church, and his father, Carey Miller who had left the church

and joined CAN. Miller had abandoned the mother and the child, and according to the church, had embezzled church funds. Nonetheless, the father's accusations prompted a March of 1988 raid on the Saugus community, in which 60 Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies took the child and confiscated church property to be used as evidence. The raid turned up no evidence and the prosecutors initially declined to file charges. However, the charges were reinstated in April of 1989, when father and son, under the "guidance" of CAN-associated attorney Peter Georgiades, agreed to testify against the church. (Justin later became a ward of the state.) This case was never brought to trial, and recently, the California district attorney formally dropped the charges.

In October of 1988, nine months after the child abuse charge, Justin's father, Carey and his brother Robert Miller, filed a suit against Alamo, TSAF and Music Square Church, falsely charging Alamo with stealing their trucking business, and asserting there was no distinction between Alamo and the church. The church claims that in fact, it was the Millers who stole \$100,000 and the trucking business from the church. (The Millers used church drivers, who were never paid, as well as church administrative officers, trucks, and the church's credit rating.)

Georgiades, the Millers' attorney, claimed they tried to serve Alamo with a summons, but they couldn't find him. Even though the Millers knew Alamo was in California, they convinced the court to serve Alamo in Arkansas. The court finally effected service in an obscure Arkansas newspaper, and then charged Alamo with unlawful flight. Alamo denies this, pointing out that during the three years the government asserted he was fugitive, he was seen in pictures with Hulk Hogan, Mr. T, (now congressman) Sonny Bono and his wife, martial artist Benny the Jet Uriquidez, and George Albert of *Cash Box* Magazine, who were all modeling his trademark jackets. He did photo sessions with Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, the mayors of Las Vegas and Jersey City; did numerous radio interviews, including several with his brother Dan Hoffman, a well-known talk show host in Nashville; attended clothing trade shows in New York, Los Angeles and Dallas; did business with several Las Vegas casinos; and had dinner with the Wynn family, owner of the Golden Nugget, Dunes and Mirage Hotels and Casinos. At one point he even spoke with the LA Sheriff's office.

Despite Alamo's obvious visibility, Judge Morris Arnold adopted the Millers' claim that Alamo was nowhere to be

found, and proceeded with the case. In April of 1990 Arnold ruled in a default judgment against Alamo, and awarded Carey and Robert Miller \$1.466 million in damages. The judge ruled that Alamo had fraudulently transferred assets to avoid a judgment, and that Alamo, the TSAF and Music Square Church were all the same—"alter egos" of each other. Neither Alamo or other church witnesses were allowed to testify at the trial, and no evidence was allowed on behalf of the church. It is clear from the judge's statement, that the case was highly colored by CAN's inflammatory charges. After issuing the judgment, he said, "No feeling person could fail to be moved by the testimony in this case or be reviled by the cold-blooded and calculated manner in which the [abusive spanking] punishment was carried out."

On July 5, 1991, Alamo was "captured" in Tampa, Florida where he and other church members openly operated a hardware store and family-style restaurant. He was charged with threatening to kidnap Judge Morris Arnold. In September of 1991, a Ft. Smith, Arkansas jury acquitted Alamo of these charges.

In April of 1982, Susan Alamo died of cancer, and was buried at Georgia Ridge. In 1991, after the government confiscated the church's Georgia Ridge property and there

were threats that the mausoleum was going to be desecrated, her body was taken from the Georgia Ridge mausoleum. In March of 1992, Christhiaon Coie, Susan Alamo's estranged daughter whom she had disowned, filed a lawsuit inspired by CAN against Alamo accusing him of stealing her mother's body. Coie hadn't seen her mother in over twenty years, including during the time she was dying. (She has even denied that her mother died of cancer.) But neither Coie or CAN could miss the opportunity of a potential financial reward from characterizing the removal of the body, a felony in Arkansas, as a "theft." The judge fined Alamo \$100,000 and ordered his imprisonment unless he reveals the whereabouts of the body. While Alamo denies knowledge of where the body lies, he points out that according to Arkansas law, the body belongs to the spouse and not to the child. The case is on appeal.

REVOCATION OF THE CHURCH'S TAX EXEMPT STATUS

During this same period, the IRS began to move against Alamo and the churches. In 1985, prodded by CAN members, they revoked the church's tax-exempt status retroactively for the years 1977 to 1980. Despite the church's attempts to reverse this ruling, it was

upheld in 1992. The IRS simultaneously opened a criminal investigation against Alamo, thus effectively denying him the right to testify in the tax exempt case.

In 1990, the IRS filed liens of \$7.9 million against church-run workshops (businesses) for taxes it claimed were due in six states—Tennessee, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Oklahoma, and Florida. The IRS then issued a (jeopardy) assessment against Alamo claiming he owed \$745,000 in personal income taxes for the years 1977 through 1980, and that Alamo-related companies owed another \$5 million in corporate income tax, and \$1.6 million in unpaid employees withholding taxes.

These charges, coupled with the default judgment in the Miller case, gave the IRS license to seize church property. In June of 1990, two dozen IRS agents raided the "Alamo of Nashville" store, seizing all of its merchandise and equipment. In October of 1991, the jeopardy assessment was abated by Federal Judge Thomas Weisman, who stated that the IRS had acted illegally. Eventually, the IRS and CAN attorney Georgiades, succeeded in getting another judge to allow them to re seize the property.

In February of 1991, sixty U.S. Marshal Service agents, with weapons drawn, stormed

the Alma and Georgia Ridge, Arkansas communities of more than 200 families. They confiscated their homes, businesses, and personal possessions, took scores of designer jackets ready for market, industrial sewing machines, dozens of cars and trucks, and over \$8,000 in cash. They cut off phone and electrical lines, and closed the cafeteria, throwing the families out of their homes in the dead of the winter, and guaranteeing they wouldn't return. In addition, they took all the financial records, depriving Alamo of any means of defense in the tax violations cases. At least six separate court pleas in federal courts for return of the financial records were denied. Other seizures took place in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida and Oklahoma.

THE POWER OF THE "CULT" LABEL

Meanwhile, the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles "cult" division, in a CAN-related campaign, launched a successful boycott to get stores to stop carrying Alamo fashions. They echoed the Millers' false child abuse charges against Alamo, and even arranged media interviews for the Millers. Even though these charges were unproven and later dropped, the department stores did not want to get caught up in a controversy, and Alamo lost con-

tracts with Bullocks, Macy's, Neiman Marcus, and many others. These contracts projected enough income to pay all back taxes the IRS claimed Alamo owed.

In February of 1993, a Memphis grand jury indicted Alamo on charges of filing a false income tax return for 1985, and failing to file tax returns for the years of 1986, 1987 and 1988. In April of 1993, Alamo was arrested, and one year later, in May of 1994, his trial began before U.S. District Judge Jon P. McCalla. On June 8, 1994, Alamo was convicted of all four tax charges and sentenced to six years in prison.

Once again, Alamo was convicted by CAN-orchestrated slanders. When Judge McCalla ordered Alamo jailed, he expressed concern about the "very great control Mr. Alamo has over a number of people." While Alamo was not on trial for such bogus charges, it is clear that his conviction for tax fraud was influenced by this and other slanderous charges, which were given full play in the media.

Within a month, in July of 1994, Alamo filed a motion for a new trial, after discovering that his attorney, Jeffrey Dickstein, had been operating under a serious conflict of interest, making his defense ineffective. The government was considering charging Dickstein with tax fraud, and a bankruptcy judge had reported

Dickstein for possible criminal prosecution for money paid to him in cash on behalf of Alamo. Alamo, who was largely unaware of these charges, was a potential government witness against Dickstein. In addition, Dickstein was facing a disbarment charge in California.

Dickstein's failure to provide a competent defense, and his propensity to alienate judge and jury alike, worked against Alamo. With the exception of a few government agents who testified, the remaining witnesses were disgruntled ex-church members who were aligned with CAN. Dickstein either refused to cross-examine these witnesses, or his examination was so lackluster that he allowed these witnesses to introduce slanders damaging to Alamo's character. The trial lasted three weeks, and despite Dickstein's feeble defense, it still took the jury three days to render a verdict.

It took eighteen months after Alamo's sentence for the judge to rule against his motion for a new trial. An appeal is pending.

Beginning in April of 1991, the U.S. Marshal Service, on behalf of the Millers and Geor-



giades, began auctioning off church properties and personal items to supposedly “satisfy” the debt. The IRS held simultaneous auctions which included real estate holdings in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Tennessee. Meanwhile, through these auctions, Georgiades was able to purchase church properties for pennies on the dollar which he then resold at a hefty profit. The church has not been able to get an accounting either from the U.S. Marshal Service or from the IRS as to the worth of their confiscated properties and goods. While the church estimates their value at over \$100 million, the real value will never be known. Besides the loss of property, there were several cases of Alamo fashions being sold illegally. For example, in 1992, a Fort Smith police officer, employed by the U. S. Marshal Service, was charged and convicted of stealing Alamo jackets. There are other similar stories of stolen church goods illegally sold for individual profit.

In February and March of 1995, a court hearing was held on seven more civil tax cases against Alamo and the churches. The IRS, Alamo and the churches agreed to resolve the issues in an “offer in compromise” which is presently under discussion.

In July of 1995, Alamo filed a (2255) double jeopardy motion claiming he had been punished twice. Alamo’s liability by

the government was assessed at \$765,009. But between 1990 and 1991 over \$52 million in property and goods were seized to satisfy this tax liability. Even if the government disputed the figures, there is no question that the seizure was excessive. Alamo also filed a motion claiming the government had indicted him 254 days after the expiration of the Statute of Limitations on the first two tax counts. Alamo noted that the government waited until after they had seized his financial records to charge him, effectively stymieing his ability to defend himself. The government counter-charged that the Statute of Limitations didn’t apply since they refused to count the time Alamo was a supposed “fugitive.” In reality, the government waited two years until after Alamo was arrested before they even indicted him.

CAN INTERFERES IN PAROLE HEARING

On June 5, 1995, Colorado Parole Examiner Robertson conducted a parole hearing at Federal Corrections Institution in Colorado and recommended Alamo for parole. He noted that Alamo was a model prisoner.

On October 30, 1995, the U.S. Regional Parole Commission in Kansas City, Missouri overturned the recommendation and denied parole. The Commission chose to ignore

the Parole Examiner and over 400 letters in favor of his release, and instead relied on letters from disgruntled former church members, all allied with CAN. These letters were initially kept secret from Alamo’s attorney, and only two, both heavily redacted, have since been released. But their content was unmistakably CAN slanders, and it was based on these slanders, taken as fact, that the acting Regional Commissioner Michael Gaines made his decision. He referred to Mr. Alamo’s church as “a cult in the truest sense... [L]etters from victims are sufficient for a reasonable conclusion that subject committed his scheme by exerting unusually strong control over very vulnerable religious followers of his... He used destitute people, unwed young mothers and children to bring in money in exchange for living in subject’s religious compound.” The Regional Parole Commission adopted CAN’s explicitly ideological anti-First Amendment terminology, which has been soundly rejected by reputable religious scholars.

The Commissioners seem unaware that CAN is a religious hate group whose “brainwashing” theories have been completely debunked and are inadmissible in court. They also seem totally unaware of the First Amendment, including its prohibition of government on the free exercise of

religion. With total prejudice, the Commissioners do not recognize that these so-called “destitute people” and “unwed mothers” have the right to join any church they desire.

The parole decision is presently on appeal before the U.S. Parole Commission in Washington. Tony Alamo was denied due process. He, like all American citizens, has the right to have his case tried on the merits, in a trial free of the taint of officially sanctioned religious prejudice.

PRO-FIRST AMENDMENT VICTORIES

There are some hopeful signals that CAN’s tactics and practices are now being called into question by the judicial system. Since the Waco tragedy, many Americans have become more aware of the deadly consequences of CAN’s anti-religious rhetoric. At least one CAN practice has been stopped. As mentioned above, in October of 1995, CAN psychologists Margaret Singer and Richard Ofshe lost a major suit against the American Psychological Association (APA). They had sued because the APA had refused to endorse a report on “brainwashing” prepared by Dr. Singer, thus depriving her and Dr. Ofshe of their lucrative employment as “expert witnesses” in legal cases where the existence of “brainwashing” was at issue. The APA concluded

that her report lacked scientific rigor, and that there was no empirical evidence to support a belief in “brainwashing.” The court concurred, and ruled that their pseudo-scientific “brainwashing” theories were unsubstantiated opinions, rather than the professional consensus, and therefore, were not admissible as testimony under the Frye principle.

In March of 1992, the Emery Wilson Corporation d/b/a Sterling Management Systems, a company associated with the Scientologists, was awarded over a million dollars in a suit against CAN attorney Peter Georgiades for defamation of character and slander. In September of 1995, a jury awarded a member of the Seattle United Pentecostal Church \$5 million in damages against CAN. The church member had charged CAN and their deprogrammer Rick Ross with depriving him of his religious freedom, by abducting him, holding him against his will, and trying to coerce him into giving up his religious beliefs. This past December, in another victory against an anti-religious witch hunt, a reverend and his wife from Wenatchee, Washington were found not guilty of leading a child sex ring.

These small victories must be extended to insure religious liberty and freedom for all Americans. The term “cult” and all hate language must be permanently stripped from our

judicial system. All Americans have the right to the freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of religion. We must preserve and guarantee our Constitutional rights.

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You can tell that the government is doing everything in their power to destroy Christian churches. The Lord is coming back to earth again soon, so get your soul right with the Lord now by saying this prayer:

PRAYER

My Lord and my God, have mercy upon my soul, a sinner.¹ I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.² I believe that He died on the cross and shed His precious blood for the forgiveness of all my former sins.³ I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit⁴ and that He sits on the right hand of God at this moment, hearing my confession of sin and this prayer.⁵ I open up the door of my heart, and I invite You into my heart, Lord Jesus.⁶ Wash all of my filthy sins away in the precious blood that You shed in my place on the cross at

1 Psa. 51:5, Rom. 3:10-12, 23 2 Matt. 26:63-64, 27:54, Luke 1:30-33, John 9:35-37, Rom. 1:3-4 3 Acts 4:12, 20:28, Rom. 3:25, 1 John 1:7, Rev. 5:9 4 Psa. 16:9-10, Matt. 28:5-7, Mark 16:9, 12, 14, John 2:19, 21, 10:17-18, 11:25, Acts 2:24, 3:15, Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 15:3-7 5 Luke 22:69, Acts 2:25-36, Heb. 10:12-13 6 1 Cor. 3:16, Rev. 3:20

Calvary.⁷ You will not turn me away, Lord Jesus; You will forgive my sins and save my soul. I know because Your Word, the Bible, says so.⁸ Your Word says that You will turn no one away, and that includes me.⁹ Therefore, I know that You have heard me, and I know that You have answered me, and I know that I am saved.¹⁰ And I thank You, Lord Jesus, for saving my soul, and I will show my thankfulness by doing as You command and sin no more.¹¹

You've just completed the first step in a series of five steps which are necessary to receive salvation.

Your second step is to deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow Jesus for the purpose of mortifying your flesh, that is, for putting to death your own will, your soulful self, and the world with all of its lusts. All these must be baptized into the watery death of Christ.

Step three is your resurrection from the satanic life of Adam unto the sinless life of Christ. Step four is your ascension into a position of authority to reign for God with Christ on earth, and the fifth step is to reign for God in Christ on earth to the end for the purpose of bringing about the

kingdom of Heaven on earth. You must learn the Word of God, submit yourselves one to another and do what the Word says, so that the church and the world may see evidence of your submission to God's Word, His order, and His authority in and by you.

Praise the Lord. May God bless and reward you abundantly.

Yours in the wonderful name of Jesus,

Pastor Tony Alamo

Tony Alamo is probably the greatest patriot this country has ever known.

7 Eph. 2:13-22, Heb. 9:22, 13:12, 20-21, I John 1:7, Rev. 1:5, 7:14 8 Matt. 26:28, Acts 2:21, 4:12, Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14 9 Matt. 21:22, John 6:35, 37-40, Rom. 10:13 10 Heb. 11:6 11 John 5:14, 8:11, Rom. 6:4, I Cor. 15:10, Rev. 7:14, 22:14

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