

# **“I didn’t appreciate being treated like a commodity by my mother or having to swallow Peter’s bullshit.”**

*-- Ricky Rodriguez in an email letter to James Penn, 22 December 2000*

## **Introduction.**

**In late December, 2000, Ricky Rodriguez was making a decision to leave The Family. He wrote the following email letter, dated December 22 2000, to an older ex-member, James Penn. Penn and Ricky had known each other since Ricky was four years old, as Penn had lived and worked closely with Rick’s mother Maria (aka Mama, Karen Zerby, Katherine R. Smith), leader of The Family. Penn had left the group in 1999 and written two highly critical articles of Maria and The Family. (Available online at [www.geocities.com/magicgreenshirt](http://www.geocities.com/magicgreenshirt).) A few months earlier, Ricky and Penn had renewed an email correspondence.**

Dear James,

I wanted to ask you about something, but I certainly don’t expect a quick reply from you. Maybe we could talk about this when I see you.

I was thinking today about something you said in the last note you wrote me: “When I wrote this article, I knew that this sort of thing might happen. Bad people would take my testimony and use it for their own agenda.” Of course, I understand what you mean, but I’m wondering if you really believe that the people you’re talking about are “bad”.

Please understand, I’m not trying to split theological hairs with you, but rather I really want to know if these anti-cultists are bad or evil people wanting to attack and destroy Christianity and belief in Jesus and figuring that starting by attacking cults is the best way to start. After that, maybe they think the way would be clear to move on to mainstream, doctrinally-sound Christian believers?

Or, have these people also come from spiritually abusive, and possibly emotionally and sexually abusive cults, or have friends and family who have been through it, and simply have a genuine desire to stop this madness from happening again and again to other innocent, unsuspecting folks. Maybe they are just doing it out of revenge for being fucked over for years at the hands of wolves in sheep’s clothing, and have never been able to heal, or see their fight as part of the healing process?

Have you ever sat down with one of these died-in-the-wool anti-cultists and had a heart to heart talk about why they act the way they do and say the things they say? Have you looked into their eyes and watched their body language to see their true feelings?

I’m one of those people who have suppressed my feelings and emotions all my life. I didn’t appreciate being treated like a commodity by my mother or having to swallow Peter’s [aka Chris Smith, husband of Maria and co-leader of The Family] bullshit. But I tried to stay on the fence all these years because I just wasn’t sure what the truth was, and I wanted to be sure before I went one way or the other.

Those feelings of anger have not gone away, in fact they grew stronger even though I tried hard to push them away and sit on them. Now I’m beginning to get in touch with my

emotions and feelings that I have hidden away for so long, and to tell you the truth, I'm finding little love there, only hate for my mother and Queen Peter. I'm even finding myself starting to hate the Family people that I have to see and live with, always going on about my wonderful "training" and how great M&P [Maria and Peter] are. I can't even spit without someone throwing Love Charter [Set of rules for Family Members to abide by] shit in my face.

Some days I have come so close to snapping and going back to their [Maria and Peter's secretive leadership] compound—but not for a social visit and not as a repentant prodigal, but as an avenger. I don't see why I should have to pay for their sins. I feel like we'd be even and I could get on with my life. They fucked with me, I made them pay dearly for it, and then I could move on.

Of course, I am no ninja, and so it would be far from a surgical strike and a lot of the people there would probably end up getting hurt too. Since my quarrel is not with those poor folks it has kept me from doing so, and also the fact that I know it's not what God wants. But that hate is still there and if they ever push me too much, I might still do it.

Please understand that I would not purposely try to seriously injure or kill anyone, but rather just make them suffer a bit for what they have put me through.

Still, I would much rather that God would take this hate and anger away from me and that I could truly forgive them from my heart. But that certainly has not happened yet. I just don't have it within me. Maybe in time.

Well, please excuse the tangent that I just got off on. It feels good to share my heart with someone, though. I hope you understand.

Anyway, I just want to know what you truly feel about the anti-cult movement. If I wanted to study and devote my life to that, would it be wrong because of what it would do to me, or simply because what they do is wrong. Or is the concept not wrong at all, but one just has to judge by the motives of each individual?

Well, I look forward to being able to talk with you and hear what you think about this.

Take care, man, and have lots of fun!

Pete