

Did the WCG leaders have a doctrinal agenda?

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The following article was written by Mac Overton, John Robinson and Linda Moll Smith with help from Scott Ashley and Dixon Cartwright. It is a reprint of an *In-Transition* article that appeared in its August 25, 1995 issue.

In the months immediately following the death of Herbert W. Armstrong, the pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, in January 1986, his successor, Joseph Tkach, repeatedly vowed to build on the doctrinal foundation of Mr. Armstrong.

Over and over Mr. Tkach expressed his commitment to established church doctrine, both orally and in the pages of church publications.

One of the most striking examples of his pledge was an article in the Aug. 25, 1986, issue of *The Worldwide News*, a WCG member newspaper.

In that issue under the headline "God Restored These 18 Truths: How Thankful Are You for Them?" an introduction to the article over Mr. Tkach's name read:

"As you prepare spiritually for the coming Feast of Tabernacles, please spend time with this important article, reviewing each of the 18 truths and thanking God for restoring them to his Church."

The concluding paragraph of the WN article asked: "Where would we be without these truths? Without them -- without Herbert W. Armstrong's legacy of these 18 restored truths -- there isn't much left."

HWA's and JT's understanding: the 18 truths listed

The so-called 18 restored truths (principles meant to reimplement 1st-century Christianity) represented the WCG's understanding of (1) hierarchical church government, (2) that Mr. Armstrong preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God for the first time in 1,900 years, (3) man's ultimate destiny is to become God, (4) God is neither one person nor a Trinity, (5) man has no immortal soul, (6) man has a human spirit, (7) God is not trying to save the world in this age, (8) the church is the Kingdom of God "in embryo," (9) only those who are called of God can be converted in this age, (10) those not called in this age will be given a chance for salvation through the Great White Throne Judgment, (11) Christ and the resurrected saints will rule on earth for 1,000 years, (12) the Holy Spirit coming into us only begets us and opens our minds to spiritual understanding, (13) Christians are begotten rather than "born again," (14) the identity of modern Israel, which is understood to be (15) a principal key to understanding prophecy, (16) the annual festivals, (17) the authority of the Jewish calendar and (18) second and third tithe.

In spite of Mr. Tkach's vigorous endorsement of Mr. Armstrong's "18 restored truths," within a year of his predecessor's death a handful of then-high-ranking WCG ministers and others close

to Mr. Tkach and his administrative staff were beginning to voice concerns about the depth of Mr. Tkach's commitment to the "18 truths."

Concerned in 1987

Donald Ward, until 1995 president of Ambassador University, said he was first worried about doctrine as early as 1987.

Dr. Ward, who at the time was a member of the WCG's doctrinal committee, said Mike Feazell, Mr. Tkach's administrative assistant, would periodically make "enigmatic comments that led you to believe his theological underpinnings dramatically differed from those of Herbert Armstrong."

Leon Walker, a member of the WCG's advisory council of elders at the time of Mr. Armstrong's death, also said he had reservations early on.

"I remember one time in the late '80s -- I don't recall the precise time -- Mike [Feazell, Mr. Tkach's assistant and considered by insiders to be one of the chief architects of the WCG's doctrinal changes] said, 'God doesn't have to have a thumb,'" Mr. Walker said.

"I was puzzled at the comment, not sure at the time what he was referring to. But, as the nature-of-God discussions unfolded, I realized what he was driving at."

Both Mr. Walker and Dr. Ward said that at first there were just hints dropped here and there by: Mr. Feazell; Joe Tkach Jr., director of the U.S. ministry and later director of the entire ministry; and Greg Albrecht, editor of The Plain Truth, the old WCG's flagship magazine.

In the aftermath of the departure of thousands of members from the WCG in 1995 (the WCG would change its name to Grace Communion International in 2009), more and more former insiders were talking about what appeared to be an agenda for doctrinal change that dated back at least to the time of Mr. Armstrong's death.

But was there an agenda?

A large percentage of WCG ministers and other members were supportive of early changes introduced by the Tkach administration.

After the death of Mr. Armstrong Mr. Tkach changed a number of Mr. Armstrong's teachings, including reversing his decision to close the Big Sandy campus of Ambassador College, reversing the decision banning women's cosmetics, redefining the church's role in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, advocating a less judgmental attitude toward other churches and overturning Mr. Armstrong's prohibition against voting and celebrating birthdays.

Seemingly, Mr. Tkach enjoyed a four- or five-year honeymoon period with most ministers and other members.

But by the early 1990s there were increasing hints of change, and many ministers and a small percentage of other WCG members began thinking: I wonder if there is a doctrinal agenda.

As time passed, the concern became: I wonder what the agenda is.

Then the question was refined to: I wonder whose agenda it is.

Lead a cult to Christ

Growing numbers of ministers and lay members began to conclude that there was indeed a clear agenda to reform the WCG into a mainstream Protestant organization, or to "lead a cult to Christ," as some characterized the goal of top WCG leaders.

Until late 1994 many top WCG ministers, some of whom in 1995 were still in the WCG, told friends and concerned brethren that the apparent move to Protestantism was the work of the younger Mr. Tkach, Mr. Albrecht and Mr. Fezell and not the elder Mr. Tkach.

Most held to the belief that the elder Mr. Tkach did not personally believe the doctrines espoused by his advisers.

They pointed to the fact that most of the articles in WCG publications appearing over Mr. Tkach's signature were ghost-written. They wondered if Mr. Tkach actually understood what was being disseminated to the church in his name.

Those who continued to support Mr. Tkach personally said they saw parallels with Herbert Armstrong and his claims that he was misled by his son, Garner Ted, about doctrinal matters, notably in Systematic Theology Project, a book the church wrote and distributed to its ministry in 1978.

Those with questions about the overall direction of the church were assured by its leadership that Christ was still ruling the church, perhaps allowing the senior Mr. Tkach to be temporarily deceived.

Back on track

Some top WCG ministers who didn't accept the new WCG doctrines remained confident that Mr. Tkach would shortly see the error of the new teachings and set the WCG back on the right track, as they perceived the elder Mr. Armstrong had done in the late 1970s.

However, by December 1994 Mr. Tkach was claiming that the radically different doctrinal foundation being laid by the WCG was his idea.

Further, he told some people that he had believed in the triune nature of God for decades, dating to a time well before Mr. Armstrong's death.

Mr. Tkach, through his statements, raised the question as to whether he had hidden his beliefs from Mr. Armstrong in order to be named as his successor.

HWA kept changing his mind

Mr. Walker, who until April 1995 was the director of the WCG's Spanish work, was on the WCG's advisory council of elders at the time of Mr. Armstrong's death.

Mr. Walker, a 1960 graduate of Ambassador College, has been an elder since 1963 and was ordained a WCG evangelist in 1981. He said that shortly before Mr. Armstrong's death the WCG pastor general was undecided about who to name as his successor.

"One day he'd be leaning toward Mr. [Leroy] Neff [who died in 2014]. Another day he might be leaning toward someone else," Mr. Walker said.

"Mr. Armstrong later told me that he was choosing Mr. Tkach based on his strength, firmness and dogged determination in the receivership crisis of 1979. He said to me, and this is a direct quote, 'One thing I know about Mr. Tkach: He will not change doctrine.'"

Clearly an agenda

Although exactly who was involved in orchestrating the mid-1990s massive doctrinal shifts in the WCG remains uncertain, it became clear there was an agenda for change.

A Nebraska-based researcher who is a former member of the Worldwide Church of God said he did research into possible WCG doctrinal changes in 1987.

Greg Walburn, Ph.D., a theologian and psychotherapist who in 1995 operated the Institute for Ethical Monotheistic Studies in Fairbury, Neb., said he helped conduct industrial-market research as a circulation analyst for The Plain Truth in the mid-1980s.

"We did market studies using psychographics, geographics and demographics," Dr. Walburn said. "It was the first scientific study done of PT subscribers."

In a telephone interview with In Transition, Dr. Walburn said analyses were also made of correspondence-course students, coworkers and tithe payers.

"We examined areas of deepest penetration and looked at age-groups involved."

The researcher said he ended up in the position because he became acquainted with Roger Lippross, then Plain Truth production director, while working as a graduate student on a college archaeological project in Israel in 1985.

At APU with Mike and Greg

Dr. Walburn, a 1983 Ambassador College graduate and later an "ethical monotheist" (a believer in New Testament writings and the plan of God as revealed through the Sabbath and holy days from a Jewish perspective), said he also received a degree from Azusa Pacific University.

"I attended there for my master's degree," he said. "I was there while [Mike] Fezell was there. Greg Albrecht was also a student there but at an earlier time. Frankly, it's a very good school for its purpose, which is [to promote] Protestant [views and interpretation of Scripture]."

(An Azusa Pacific spokesman described the school as "interdenominational," not sponsored by a particular church but "evangelical from a Wesleyan Methodist perspective.")

Dr. Walburn said Mr. Feazell and others from the WCG and Ambassador College went through the theology program at APU "and bought into it."

Dr. Walburn had studied integrative psychology at Azusa Pacific, "which I filtered through the law of God. I wanted the biblical perspective."

By 1988 he was doing research into what would happen to the WCG in terms of income and membership if major doctrines were tampered with.

"I knew changes were coming," he said. "We were researching effects of changes in the Sabbath and holy days, clean and unclean meats and others."

"My theory was that, because of Mr. Armstrong's death, income would drop off 20 percent. We were projecting five years in advance and anticipated a cumulative 3 to 4 percent drop every year. This was equivalent to approximately \$30 million over a five-year period."

Comparing zip codes

Dr. Walburn said that "the first thing I did was to ask for a list of the complete membership. I would take the zip codes and compare them to the U.S. census, which is the most detailed demographic study done."

"We were looking for statistical trends, not names or addresses of any PT subscribers or church members. All research was done with strict confidentiality and anonymity maintained."

"We were trying to determine who our members were, and where they came from, by their source. That is, did they become members-readers of The Plain Truth through the telecast, through other members, through coworkers, the newsstand, friends, relatives -- what?"

He and other researchers "went back in time" to examine "conversion factors": How do new subscribers convert to primes [renewals] to coworkers to members?" He said they discovered "a substantial correlation."

No central figure for coworkers

He said the statistical analyses of the reasons for a drop in church income showed that, after Mr. Armstrong's death, on Jan. 16, 1986, "there was no central figure for coworkers to identify with." He said that, at the time, coworkers provided 20 percent of the church's income.

He added that an age analysis of coworkers showed them to be "older," and that "they did not identify with the younger presenters" who assumed The World Tomorrow TV broadcast after Mr. Armstrong's death."

Dr. Walburn said he and his colleagues helped develop a "very specific letter for the coworkers" as part of Plain Truth subscriber development to "let them feel involved -- that they count."

He said the average donation from coworkers was \$80 to \$90 a year. Projections, he said, showed "a downward trend."

"We needed to know how church leadership could counter" the trend, explained Dr. Walburn. "The answer? Let the coworkers believe there wouldn't be great changes in the organization upon the death of Mr. Armstrong.

"We wanted to see how we could serve the coworkers' spiritual and emotional needs. When Mr. Armstrong died, it was as if a close family member had died.

"We knew the coworkers were feeling the loss in the same way we the members were. There was no doubt in our minds that the coworkers were wondering what would happen to the Worldwide Church of God in the coming years. We all were.

What-if games

"We played what-if games all the time and put them in the computer model and ran it," and a regressive analysis showed the models accurately correlated with unfolding events.

"As a word to the wise for those of you in United, if you think you'll be around for any length of time -- for example, 50 years -- keep good records. That's the key to good research."

He said he had made personal "prophecies" in 1991 to a friend about the doctrinal changes coming in the WCG, which culminated in early 1995 with sweeping alterations in basic church doctrine.

"My prophecies were based on knowing the personalities in charge," he said, mentioning he was not impressed with their cognitive skills.

Meeting Dr. Merritt

One of those he revealed the information to was John Merritt, a church member and medical doctor from Southern California and a regent of Ambassador University in Big Sandy in the '90s. Dr. Walburn and Dr. Merritt first met at the Feast of Tabernacles in 1991.

"I first met Dr. Walburn on the Last Great Day of the 1991 Feast of Tabernacles in Norfolk, Va.," Dr. Merritt told In Transition. "My wife and I just happened to meet him in the lunch line at a Holiday Inn there.

"He was just moving from Pasadena at that time, and we struck up a conversation. He joined my family for lunch. He was inquiring about Ambassador, and things like that.

"I asked [Dr. Walburn] what he did," Dr. Merritt said. "He told us he'd been gathering statistics for the church and completing his Ph.D. at the same time, and then we asked about the statistical work."

Dr. Walburn related to the Merritts "the changes that were planned for the church," Dr. Merritt said, "and he listed out the plans for the next five years. We didn't have any idea whether he was believable or not, and in fact I later contacted WCG headquarters and reported him for spreading dissident information.

"Dr. Herman Hoeh [who died in 2004] was the one I reported him to.

"I didn't hear any more from Dr. Walburn until we met online [via E-mail] just before the Jubilee '95 conference." (Jubilee '95 was a seminar sponsored by Dr. Merritt and others May 28-29, 1995, at Dana Point, Calif. See In Transition, June 23, 1995.)

"My wife remembered the name, and I remembered who he was. Then we talked about what he's doing now and invited him like we invited almost everybody to come and attend the conference."

The Trinity formula

Concerning radical doctrinal changes, Dr. Merritt said Dr. Walburn "first mentioned that there was going to be a change in the born-again doctrine. We'd heard that already, but then he mentioned there would be a change in the nature-of-God understanding.

"He also said that the church would adopt the Trinity formula.

"We laughed at that. My wife asked him who he was, and he said, 'Just consider me your angel.'

"My wife said, 'That would not have been my first guess.'

"Then he told about the plans for going to voluntary Sabbath and voluntary holy-day observance and voluntary tithing, and then he mentioned introduction of Christmas and Easter and eventually moving to a Sunday worship.

"Later, when we would see these things about to happen and someone would say, 'How do you know?' we would jokingly say our angel had told us. But he literally did outline for us ahead of time what was going to happen, and it was helpful for us because then we weren't surprised after the first round or two."

Can't make up this stuff

When the Merritts subsequently heard of plans for more major doctrinal changes from other sources in Pasadena, "then we realized that they [the sources] weren't just making up this stuff."

Dr. Walburn said that, as early as 1988, it was "informal knowledge" among some WCG staffers in Pasadena that "Joe Tkach Jr. said that he was willing to lose up to 50 percent of the church membership to get major doctrinal changes through.

"We felt a 50 percent drop in membership was conceivable, although not necessarily acceptable, after all the doctrinal changes were in place."

When literature that had been a staple of the church's evangelistic efforts was taken out of print, Dr. Walburn said he and his associates knew "the handwriting was on the wall."

"We knew we were in trouble when they withdrew Mystery of the Ages [ostensibly] over two or three wrong sentences and United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy," he said.

"The Tkaches were responsible for a \$200-million-a-year organization, which in 1986 was doing great things in the lives of millions of people via the message that was revealed to Mr. Armstrong by God in the 1920s.

"The Tkaches were willing to destroy that work, down to \$30 million to \$40 million a year, for what? In the name of New Covenant Christianity.

One thing leads to another

"Once you accept the tenets that a Christian is no longer under bondage of the law of God," said Dr. Walburn, "you have to do away with the great principles of the holy days, the Sabbath, kosher laws, even the concepts of sin and repentance from sin.

"In other words, stop being Jewish and join us in our Christian heritage of freedom from anything Jewish. Remember the Christian community has a long-standing hatred of the Jews.

"You must then accept the Trinity, the concept that the family of God is a closed unit, and you must not adhere doctrinally to the need to observe the holy days or Sabbath. Otherwise you will offend the Christian community.

"Ultimately the question is, 'What will you do to be accepted by mainstream Christianity?'"

Mr. Feazell outlines beliefs

Steve Sheppherd, 43 years old in 1995, served as pastor of the WCG's Elkhart, Ind., congregation from December 1990 until March 1995, when he resigned and later joined the UCG.

He talked with In Transition on three occasions in 1995 about conversations he'd had in 1992 with Mr. Feazell concerning Mr. Feazell's doctrinal views.

That year Mr. Sheppherd attended the WCG's Feast of Tabernacles at the Wisconsin Dells, Wis., site.

During the festival he had a two-hour dinner at a restaurant with his wife, Lori Jo, their two children and Mike and Vicky Feazell and their two children.

After leaving the restaurant Mr. Sheppherd said the Feazells invited him and his family to their lodgings, where they talked for another hour and a half to two hours.

During the conversation Mr. Feazell said he did not agree with many of the fundamental concepts taught by Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Sheppherd said he was "absolutely stunned" to learn about Mr. Feazell's personal doctrinal beliefs.

Please in '92

"I hadn't heard any of this stuff before," he said. "I believed what I had been taught just a few years earlier at Ambassador College.

"Actually, in 1992 I was very pleased with the general direction the church was heading. I loved seeing us be less judgmental and more open to others. But I also had a general sense not all was well."

At that time Mr. Sheppherd had just become a church pastor, after leaving a successful \$2 million business in Bend, Ore., at age 33 to attend Ambassador College, Pasadena.

He attended from 1985 to 1987 and served as associate pastor of the Pittsburgh, Pa., congregation before assuming his first pastorate in Indiana.

"Here I was as a new pastor filled with enthusiasm and 100 percent behind headquarters," Mr. Sheppherd said. "All of a sudden I hear about all of Mike's personal beliefs, and I was blown away."

Took accurate notes

The almost four hours of conversation left such an impression on Mr. Sheppherd that, upon leaving the Feazells, he immediately returned to his room and made notes about the conversation.

During his third conversation with In Transition Mr. Sheppherd referred to his notes and read extensively from them.

"I took the notes for my own benefit, not for any other purpose at the time," Mr. Sheppherd said.

As Mr. Sheppherd recounted the conversation, reading from his notes, he said he was sure his recollections were extremely accurate.

"I know the value of taking notes as quickly after an event as possible, and I began these notes within a half hour of the end of the conversation."

Mr. Sheppherd said that, since he went to college as an older student, he was concerned about making good grades, so he refined his note-taking system.

"I took notes in class. Then when the class dismissed I remain seated and fleshed out my notes with a different-colored pen. Then that evening when I got home I used a third color to add more details. The process worked well for me."

Warm, friendly, remarkably candid

Mr. Sheppherd said Mr. Feazell was remarkably candid.

"I didn't argue with Mike about anything. He was warm and friendly. I want to make it perfectly clear that Mr. Feazell never indicated that he had an agenda or was trying to change the church. In fact, I like Mike. He's very bright and was enjoyable to talk to.

"I was probably better prepared for my conversation with Mike since I had a heated conversation about the U.S. and B.C. [British Commonwealth] in Prophecy with Greg Albrecht in the spring of 1992. Greg stayed with us at our home at Passover time.

"Greg was trying to tell me there was nothing to the United States and British Commonwealth in prophecy scenario outlined by Mr. Armstrong. Greg said Mr. Armstrong had plagiarized the U.S.-B.C. theory, and it was an irrelevant theory.

"So I had learned from my encounter with Greg, and I was much more controlled with Mike. I wanted to learn firsthand what he believed. As a new minister, it was important for me to understand what the top guys in Pasadena were thinking.

"It was all very open. Greg got hot under the collar," Mr. Sheppherd said of his earlier encounter with Mr. Albrecht. "But Mike was very cool about it all."

Tom Damour verified

To further substantiate the accuracy of Mr. Sheppherd's story, In Transition contacted Tom Damour, who at that time had recently pastored the Champaign and Springfield, Ill., congregations of the WCG.

Mr. Sheppherd said he had recounted his conversation with Mr. Feazell in detail to Mr. Damour, who is Mr. Sheppherd's stepbrother, a few days after the 1992 Feast of Tabernacles.

Mr. Damour verified that Mr. Sheppherd told him in detail of his conversation with Mr. Feazell. Mr. Damour said he clearly remembered the conversation with Mr. Sheppherd since it was so shocking to both men. Mr. Damour in 1995 was a UCG pastor.

Mr. Sheppherd said he also told his elders in the Elkhart congregation of the conversation.

Lori Jo Sheppherd also verified the general account, explaining she was not a party to all the conversations because she and Mrs. Feazell were sometimes engaged in a different conversation.

Highlights of conversation

Reading from his notes, which he had organized by doctrinal topic rather than chronologically, Mr. Sheppherd recounted highlights of the evening's conversation.

Where direct quotes are indicated, they represent quotes attributed directly to Mr. Feazell in Mr. Sheppherd's 1992 notes:

- The Feast of Tabernacles does not picture part of the plan of God. Mr. Feazell said there is no New Testament command to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

"We don't know how salvation will be offered, but we know God is fair and will work it out. We're just not sure how."

Concerning continued observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, Mr. Feazell said "all churches need conventions, and the Feast of Tabernacles is as good as any time to get together."

- The WCG has not preached the gospel. "The gospel is being preached without us, and it's time for us to join in."

Mr. Sheppherd said this statement especially stunned him. Mr. Feazell also said, "God can still use us even if we're not the only true church. That would make us more mature than them because they [other churches] can't accept that."

Concerning other churches, Mr. Feazell said: "God is working with different churches, and on nonsalvation issues we will need to overlook [them]."

- The book of Revelation is not prophetic. Mr. Feazell said "we cannot understand Revelation," including Revelation 2 and 3. "It is filled with wild metaphor."

Mr. Sheppherd then asked what is the purpose of the book of Revelation. Mr. Feazell said it was written to tell all Christianity to hang on, "that it will all work out."

Concerning the traditional WCG teaching that Jesus will return to earth and establish His government, Mr. Feazell said, "The advent won't occur like we thought."

- The English-speaking countries and democracies of Western Europe are not descended from Israel. Mr. Sheppherd said Mr. Feazell repeated many of the phrases used by Mr. Albrecht six months earlier. Neither believed there is validity to Anglo-Israelism.

Consequently, Mr. Feazell said, "the church has replaced Israel. Why would there only be a few survivors of one nation in the world tomorrow?"

He also said "physical blessings don't count if they are given 4,000 years later."

- The WCG cannot trace its roots to the 1st century. Mr. Feazell said you "can't trace our [WCG] roots back through the ages, just back to the Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists."
- The law of God is done away. Mr. Feazell said that in the New Testament all Christians have to do is "just believe." He said that in the example in the book of Acts there was no mention of law-keeping or Sabbath-keeping when the 3,000 were baptized at one time.

Mr. Sheppherd asked if the fruit of keeping God's law was good.

"There were no locks in Nazi Germany," Mr. Feazell said.

Mr. Sheppherd took that answer to imply that there was a parallel between the law of God and the tyranny of Nazism.

- The old-line ministers won't teach the revised material. Mr. Sheppherd said he asked Mr. Feazell how many of the most-senior ministers would go along with his personal beliefs.

Mr. Feazell said that WCG leaders in Pasadena were having difficulty with the old-line ministers, notably Roderick Meredith, who later founded the Global Church of God and Living Church of God but was a WCG evangelist at the time.

Mr. Feazell said evangelist Herman Hoeh was trying to understand the new teachings, but that he (Dr. Hoeh) believed that Mr. Armstrong was not that far off in his teachings.

Mr. Feazell said that evangelist Ronald Kelly was trying hard to understand the new material.

Mr. Feazell said the senior Mr. Tkach had told his staff to keep covering the new material in The Pastor General's Report, a WCG publication for elders, including unpaid elders, and in The Worldwide News, a WCG member newspaper, because ministers weren't covering the material.

Mr. Sheppherd said that that "raised a flag with me since I then realized I was not the only one having trouble with the new teachings."

Up at 4 a.m. for Bible study

Mr. Sheppherd said he was so unnerved by Mr. Feazell's revelations about his personal beliefs that he got up at 4 o'clock the next morning to study his Bible.

"I wanted to see if I had the right address."

Mr. Sheppherd said he coped with the information he learned from Mr. Feazell for the next two-plus years by clinging to the belief that "Mr. Tkach [senior] wasn't a party to Greg's and Mike's beliefs.

"I knew something big would come of all this, that either there was a conspiracy that would explode or the church would change drastically.

"I was 100 percent behind Mr. Tkach. I read from the PGR and tried to support the leadership every chance I got.

"But, when Mr. Tkach declared himself in December 1994, I knew I would have to leave."

Imperial banned bell-bottoms

Mr. Sheppherd said he was also surprised by several tirades both Mr. and Mrs. Feazell made against hard-line ministers who "operated as sheriffs instead of shepherds" and specifically Mr. Feazell's experiences at Imperial School.

(Imperial School was a WCG-operated elementary through high school with campuses in Pasadena, Calif., Big Sandy, Texas, and Bricket Wood, England.)

"Mike complained bitterly about being forbidden from wearing bell-bottom trousers, wide belts and other clothing that was stylish when he was in school."

Where could it go from there?

While it is clear that there was an agenda for doctrinal change that had been unfolding for almost a decade, there were still many pieces of the story missing in 1995.

Thoughtful observers wondered what to expect in the months and years ahead. In the past, WCG leaders had dismissed members' heartfelt concerns about "Where are we going with all this?" by responding, "Nothing has really changed."

Even as WCG members were being told in 1995 there were no plans for Sunday worship, for example, one can't help but wonder if that will change as well, given the track record of the present WCG administration.