

The Two Faces of the Worldwide Church of God



by Peter Ditzel

A few years ago, there was no doubt among Christian ministries that the Worldwide Church of God was a cult. But since the death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong, in 1986, the WCG has attracted much attention by making many changes, particularly in doctrine.

In recent months, an increasing number of ministries have accepted the WCG as Christian. Some consider events in the WCG as nothing short of a miracle. One ministry labeled the WCG an “uncult,” and another said it has completed the transformation “from the status of a cult to a firm standing in the church of Jesus Christ.”¹ But amid all of the plaudits, members and newly exited nonmembers continue to report spiritual abuse by those holding leadership positions over them in the WCG.

Enter or Exit David Covington

David Covington was a member of the WCG for twenty-five years and was in the full-time ministry for five of those years. He was pastor of the Roanoke

and Lynchburg, Va., congregations and was a contributing writer to the WCG’s *Plain Truth* magazine. Covington holds a Master’s degree in community agency counseling from the University of Memphis and is a National Certified Counselor. He wrote the cover story for and was himself featured on page 1 of the May-June 1996 *Plain Truth*. The WCG administration asked Covington to conduct workshops on spiritual healing for over 600 WCG ministers and their wives in six states. But in May 1996, David Covington resigned because, “after nineteen months of addressing these issues with [the WCG’s] administration, it became apparent that I was actually enabling a sick system that does not desire genuine change for Jesus.”²

Referring to pastor General Joe Tkach Jr., Mike Feazell, director of Church Administration, and Greg Albrecht, editor of the *Plain Truth*, Covington writes:

“You have implemented these changes [the changes that have won the admiration of so

many observers] through our historically abusive dynamics. In your present position, I am convinced you aren’t even capable of seeing, much less addressing, the genuine problems. I compare the 1996 WCG to a husband who used to beat his wife seven days a week and now has cut back to four. And, the wife is supposed to be satisfied with his progress! Worse, still, he’s holding seminars on domestic violence! Your administration continues to be abusive, but you hold spiritual healing conferences.”³

Addressing why outside observers are reporting that genuine repentance has taken place in the WCG, Covington points out, “These observers cannot possibly understand what it is like to be a member of this church. They miss the dynamics of this system which remain abusive.”⁴

He also points out continuing doctrinal problems: “the WCG still rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment, holds observances on the Jewish Sabbath and festivals ..., and teaches as doctrine the debatable matter of post-mortem evangelization [i.e.,

those who are not saved in this life still have a chance to be saved in a future resurrection].”⁵ I would add that the abusive heretic, Herbert W. Armstrong, continues to be regarded as a minister of Jesus Christ.

Covington lists nine fundamental problems in the WCG:

1. Authoritarian Hierarchy: Herbert W. Armstrong established a hierarchy in the WCG with himself — the pastor general — at the top. The only aspect of this that changed with Armstrong’s death in 1986 was that Joseph W. Tkach became the all-powerful pastor general. When he died in 1995, he was succeeded as pastor general by his son, Joe Tkach Jr. No members or elected representatives of the members ever were consulted about who should become the leader of their church; they did not have a chance to consider whether the succeeding pastor general was spiritually or morally qualified or had the intelligence or judgment to capably run the WCG. The succeeding pastor general was simply imposed on the members by the preceding pastor general. Hierarchical government has been acceptable for years in the WCG because members believe the leaders are appointed by God.⁶

2. Lack of Accountability: In any WCG congregation, neither the deacons, elders, nor pastor are accountable to the local church or the members of the church in any way. They must give account only to their superiors, and that line of authority ends with the pastor general in Pasadena, who is legally accountable to no one.

The WCG has at times made certain statements that sound as if decisions come from “the board” or from the Advisory Council of Elders, and not from

the pastor general.⁷ But the April 1995 *Ambassador Report* newsletter published the “Bylaws of the Worldwide Church of God, a California Nonprofit Religious Corporation.” These state that the “‘Corporate Governance’ shall mean the pastor general.” They further reveal that ecclesiastical decisions “shall be within the sole and subjective discretion of the Corporate Governance”; that the pastor general has sole authority over the contents of the bylaws; that the pastor general has sole authority over the selection of the Advisory Council of Elders (the members of the corporation) and the Board of Directors; and that the pastor general can remove any member of the corporation (Advisory Council of Elders) and anyone — or even everyone — from the Board of Directors without cause or notice.⁸

The *Ambassador Report* observes, “The Corporation’s board is therefore a *true dummy board*. Because the Association’s Advisory Board of Elders is determined in the same way, it, too, is a dummy board. ... In the final analysis, all WCG doctrines, policies, assets, and personnel are controlled legally by the whims, caprices, and fantasies of but one human being — Joseph W. Tkach [now Joe Tkach Jr.]. In a very real sense, therefore, the Worldwide Church of God is [Joe Tkach Jr.]”⁹

The WCG has occasionally talked about changing its hierarchical government, and did so again after Covington distributed his resignation letter. But, although the WCG has had 10 years since Herbert Armstrong’s death to implement such a change, it has not yet done so. The board of directors cannot truly lead the WCG as long as these bylaws remain intact. Nothing restrains the church from

returning to its old doctrinal positions (or going on to new heresies) if the pastor general so wishes. And, despite talk of change, the WCG inconsistently continues to defend its hierarchical government with references to the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰

The following would not have occurred in a church in which the leadership was held accountable to the congregation: After trying unsuccessfully for months to get her pastor to address several questions and concerns (including being removed from her youth ministry of 15 years after she mentioned that with the doctrinal changes she would now be free to teach the children about Jesus¹¹), a member resorted to writing to Pasadena. She reports that it was after she took this action that her pastor and his wife “came to my house to demand that I retract everything I had written in the note and to state that unless I promised to never again send such a note, that there was no hope for us to work together. In fact, [the pastor’s wife] literally waved my letter at me several times and alluded to a secret file they had on me... . The ‘counseling’ session was a sham. I broke down in tears at the end, realizing they had the upper hand, and Headquarters, as always, would take their word against mine. So I concluded aloud that I would just have to leave. They were both quick to endorse my ‘decision’ after which [the pastor’s wife] insisted that our stories ‘match’ in case Headquarters questioned them or me.”¹²

Notice how the WCG handled this matter at a time when it was billing itself as a New Covenant church dedicated to serving its members. After poring over the copious letters and e-mail messages between this ex-member

and various WCG ministers and between those ministers and David Covington (whom the former member contacted concerning her case), I find an obvious bias against her.

Her letters were analyzed for negativism, her heart was judged and her intentions assumed; she was even placed in the same category as the carnal Pharisees. "Would a person trained in the skills of conflict resolution," wrote one headquarters minister in reference to this woman, "have found a way to appease these enemies of Jesus?"¹³ So a person who cried out for help found herself labeled an "enemy of Jesus" who could not be helped. The WCG's high-handed approach is indicative of a desire to protect its leadership and image at the expense of the individual Christian. But in a Christian church the burden is on the church to resolve such conflicts without labeling every member who rocks the boat as carnal and unable to be helped.

3. Closed Communication:

The pastor general is inaccessible to the average member. Those who try to reach him are usually contacted by a staff member trained to either mollify or intimidate. Members may sometimes receive letters *signed* by the pastor general but not *written* by him.

Covington writes, "Communication is still far too closed. Dissent is not tolerated, but is labeled as division and used to disfellowship [or pressure into quitting] those who disagree."¹⁴ Closed communication occurs at all levels in the WCG. A member may have more success in speaking with the local pastor than in reaching the pastor general, but will often still be stonewalled or intimidated rather than reach a satisfactory closure to the prob-

lem. The former member mentioned above writes:

"My last recent attempt to question my local pastor on blatant problems within the congregation which are hurting the congregation, were met with the standard 'You must have had a traumatic experience in your youth to be so negative.' (In fact, my youth was relatively problem-free. My home life was happy... .) The real trauma has been the control and abuse I have allowed myself to endure in this church because I believed at the time that it was God's will."¹⁵

So, while Joe Tkach Jr. makes public apologies for "past" wrongs,¹⁶ members and former members are left to lick their own wounds. In another letter, this same ex-member asks:

"If those at headquarters are sincere, then why am I spiritually homeless, demoralized and hurting? Why doesn't anybody reach out to me and tell me that I should stay and we can work this out together for the benefit of everybody? Why must I have reinforced this feeling I have felt all along; that I am expendable to keep up the appearance that the local church is problem-free because my pastor and his wife are doing such a fabulous job?"¹⁷

4. Manipulation over tithing:

Giving, by definition, is something we do freely. Giving to a church or religious organization is something we do freely as an act of worship. If we donate because we are told we will get a blessing; or because the church commands it; or because we are being made to feel guilty if we do not support an organization that has been financially irresponsible; or because the organization de-

scribes itself as having such a unique and important ministry that we would be letting God down if we didn't send in a donation, we are not giving, we are being manipulated into paying.

There is a difference of opinion among Christians about whether biblical references to tithing apply to Christians. The WCG which once had a three-tiered system of tithing has now publicly taken the stand that tithing is not part of the New Covenant and Christians are not obligated to obey tithing laws. But when income dropped, the WCG was quick to explain that the new doctrine means members are not *restricted* to giving *only* 10 percent of their income (i.e., they should now be giving more).¹⁸ This amounts to no real change because the WCG always told members to not only pay their tithes, but to give generous offerings besides. Further, the WCG returned to the old manipulative techniques of telling members that God will bless them for giving, God commands them to give, and the WCG with its unique ministry is in financial need.¹⁹

As if this were not enough, the WCG's Mike Fezell laid on a generous dose of guilt by writing to members, "We are now reaching a point where more decline in income will result in cuts [in employees and important projects]. ... It is no secret that neglect of financial support of the church is often symptomatic of a general neglect of living in Christ."²⁰

But Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton write in *Toxic Faith*, "Religious addicts believe that nothing is more essential than the organization's continuation, which is funded by the gifts of the followers... . People are seen

as sources of funds to keep the organization going rather than individuals worthy of service from the organization... . If the organization you support begs for your money and seems to place greater importance on your money than on you, stop supporting that organization.”²¹

An ex-member in Ohio describes what happened when members withheld their support:

“And should we doubt the motives of our pastor general, we were constantly reminded that if he wasn’t following Jesus Christ, would he have committed ‘financial suicide’ by saying that tithing was no longer required? (This comment was followed up later on in videos and co-worker letters as ‘...most are faithfully giving 10% and some people are giving *even more...*’ ‘...10% should be a *minimal* guideline for giving...’ ‘...you’re no longer restricted to giving only 10%! You can give 10, 20, 30 and even 40% now!’ Of course, this wasn’t about to happen, so we were once again chastised with, ‘Now we know where your hearts *really* are!’ because of the drastic drop in income.)”²²

Whenever the WCG finds itself in one of its many financial crises, the remedies include coercing members for more money, cutting services to local congregations, and dismissing lower-level employees. The highly paid WCG leaders never take voluntary pay cuts. In fact, only days before the WCG published the articles cited above, and typical of the arrogance the WCG has shown throughout its history, Joe Tkach Jr. received a pay raise.²³

5. Financial control: David Covington writes to the pastor general:

“The congregations still send 100% of their money [donations] to you... . Current regional pastor Craig Bachellor told Mike Feazell and me at dinner, in January 1995, he had determined his congregation received 19 cents back in services for every \$1 sent to Pasadena. Where does the rest go? ...”

“The problem is that the members do not compare their situation to the thousands of other Christian churches where 100% is collected locally and a small percentage is then sent by the congregation to a governing body.”²⁴

6. Local congregations not a true priority: The WCG leadership sounds like it is reforming its relationship to church members: “Friends, we are a church, and we sincerely want headquarters to serve the spiritual needs of our members rather than thinking that the members exist to serve us.”²⁵ But Covington charges that local congregations are receiving fewer services all the time: they still rent halls; funds for Wednesday night Bible studies have been cut off; some pastors are stretched between two (and sometimes as many as five) churches; congregations are not even allotted funds for such basics as yellow pages listings, business telephone lines, or post office boxes; and the idea is “being bantered about that our ministry will go to a part-time basis.”²⁶

Covington also tells Tkach, “It does not appear congregations will benefit from the \$250 million you expect to receive from the sale of the [buildings and grounds in Pasadena]. I have heard your Q&A session several times and recall your response about how it will be spent as including the following: 1) an

endowment for the corporate headquarters, 2) a ministerial retirement program, and 3) an endowment for Ambassador University. On one occasion you mentioned lastly that some might be used to help congregations toward a building fund.”²⁷

In fact, the WCG did tout a building program in its newspaper to members, including pictures of what the local church buildings would look like. But, typical of many of the WCG’s announced policies, the program has never gotten off the ground.²⁸

7. Chaos and confusion: Ex-WCG members often mention the chaos that resulted from the way the WCG introduced the doctrinal changes: Statements were made, retracted, and restated; members were told one thing, but would hear Christian ministries quote their leaders as saying something very different; the Sabbath, festivals, dietary laws, and tithing were no longer required, but were still used to judge someone’s “commitment.”

Also, administrators continually shift employees from one department to another. And the WCG’s record concerning various programs — such as the building program mentioned above — is no better. Covington writes,

“I traveled to a planning and ideas conference ... for the newly instituted Family Ministry department only to find out upon arrival that the program had been canceled. Ron Kelly was then given yet another new job in ministerial development where he promptly started a program for tuition reimbursement. This new program seemed to last little more than a month and joined a WCG graveyard littered with such short-lived policies. The roller coaster

goes up and down, and people's lives are thrown from side to side. It has been my experience with the historic culture of the WCG that the message of salvation through Jesus gets lost in an overflow of programs, policies and crisis."²⁹

I suppose that only God and top WCG leaders know whether this chaos is premeditated, or merely the result of ineptitude. But WCG observers should be aware of Ken Blue's words:

"Another tactic of keeping people out of touch with the present is to foment confusion, punctuated by crisis. Policies may be handed down and programs launched which seem to fit no coherent pattern.... The resulting turmoil keeps people from finding out what is really going on. This serves to cover up the fact that almost no productive activity may be occurring."³⁰

8. Lack of respect for members and ministry: David Covington quotes David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen in their book *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*: "[One] reason for secrecy in a church is that the leadership has a condescending, negative view of the laity. This results in conspiracies on the leadership level. They tell themselves, 'People are not mature enough to handle the truth.' This is patronizing, at best."³¹ The WCG members were the last to hear of the doctrinal changes.

A former member writes, "If they were really honest, sincere, and genuinely repentant, they would have worked on the *inside* of the church first, not going to the Christian ministries and countercult organizations six years before they sprang the new changes on the gullible membership."³² This same person also

says that "honest, sincere, Spirit-filled Christian leaders would have orchestrated the changes ... on their knees; beseeching God to step in. Then gently and lovingly, as kind shepherds, setting about to first instruct the members in the truth; giving them all the help they possibly could. ... This takes real faith."³³

Covington writes to Tkach, "I agree with your doctrinal changes, but absolutely disagree with the method by which you have imposed them upon the fellowship, instituting one change at a time. ... One person described feeling like they had been spiritually raped in the past year. A WCG pastor compared your approach to bobbing a dog's tail, one painful inch at a time."³⁴

One of the exiting members quoted earlier writes,

"We are tired of the continued condescension of the headquarters elite toward the 'lowly laity' in terms of telling us what we are capable of understanding or not. We are tired of being controlled in every facet of church life and most definitely tired of the double standard and double talk that permeates everything that emanates from Pasadena on down through our local pastor... . Although it may have duped Ruth Tucker and Hank Hanegraaff, the WCG is not the Jesus-centered church it is purporting to be. It still speaks in half-truths (e.g., 'a Christian doesn't *have* to keep the Old Testament Holy Days, but those who do are proving their passion for Christ'); it will not denounce Mr. Armstrong as the heretic and blasphemer that he was; and its pastors are not accountable for the way in which they deal with the laity. In some ways it

currently meets the profile of an abusive cult more than it ever did. When I dared to believe the rhetoric of a supposedly healthier WCG a year ago, I discovered that my questions and concerns have no more merit than under any previous authoritarian WCG regime. Although it gives the appearance of having repented of its false belief that it was the one true church, in reality it has done nothing more than slightly shift its rhetoric and self-focus from being the one true church to 'look how great we are because we are humble enough to change.' It still desires and claims a unique place in Christendom for its recent 'repentance.'"³⁵

This lack of respect also shows itself in the way individuals are dehumanized or publicly ridiculed. I can testify that this was common when I was a WCG employee — particularly concerning anyone who asked hard questions, criticized, or left the WCG. Covington tells of a more recent incident he observed in which a church administration supervisor told a small group of people that an African-American pastor who left the WCG "just 'wanted to be white,' was in it for the money, and possessed mental problems."³⁶ Since leaving the WCG, Covington has been likened to Judas Iscariot and labeled as immature and arrogant, among other things;³⁷ I have been accused of being a liar in no less than a dozen different and imaginative ways; and the cultic practice of making personal attacks on former members continues.³⁸

"Loving, kind, good people that only wanted to serve God with all their hearts and souls. People who put Him first in their lives. People who pa-

tiently underwent many trials and endured ... and endured. People who felt close to their God. A big, cruel joke. Betrayed by men who were not men of God. Beaten and left bleeding along the road of life" (written by a former WCG member in Colorado).

9. Organization more important than Jesus or people: I have long said that the WCG exists to perpetuate itself and profit its leaders. Observers might argue that this is not true of the new WCG as evidenced by the loss of members and income due to its doctrinal correction. But while employed by the WCG I was told that the changes were being made to shed the cult image and to shift *Plain Truth* readership to a market more likely to donate. So perhaps WCG leaders didn't expect such a great loss, or thought the changes would bring them into a more lucrative market. They may have taken a gamble with potentially high returns. In other words, there is more than one possible reason for their actions.

David Covington makes this interesting observation:

"I know you [Tkach] say that you have lost members and income by the changes you have made. *However, your power and prestige have not been abated.* In fact, you have now had opportunity to speak before hundreds of denominational leaders, be interviewed on radio with James Kennedy and Hank Hanegraaff, obtain several book contracts, and that in addition to your planned radio program (and aforementioned pay increase). You did not possess anywhere near this kind of prominence before."³⁹

Covington ends his resignation letter with this paragraph:

"You continue to engineer us videos and materials to design a Christian church out of a destructive system. We pastors follow the instructions carefully and paint by numbers the fireplace on the wall, according to your specifications. Then, our members all gather around this facade and rub their hands waiting to get warm. We wait but grow weary. Many ministers are on the verge of emotional breakdown, and you are financially cutting them off! Our structure shuts out and stifles Jesus. It must change! I beseech members not to wait on you, but follow the Spirit. He is the One waiting!"⁴⁰

I conclude this article intensely aware that it does not adequately express the pain in the literally pounds of letters in my files from people who have recently left the WCG. To them, I apologize. I am also aware that the WCG — though necessarily treated as an organization in this article — has thousands of members, each of them an individual. In no way am I attempting to judge any individual's Christianity.

My hope in writing this article is threefold. First, I hope the idea that it is somehow virtuous to stay in the WCG will fall from WCG members' eyes, that their eyes will be opened to the kind of organization in which they have placed their trust, and that they will see that fellowship with the body of Christ awaits them outside the WCG.

Second, I hope that observers of the WCG will begin to see the complexity of the issue of an abusive cult becoming a healthy, orthodox church. It is not as simple as changing a few doctrines and mouthing some evangelical-sounding phrases. The individual members — some of

whom have been manipulated by mind control techniques for so long they do not even realize they have been abused — must be taken into account.

A WCG pastor who claims to have discovered the Gospel of grace and the extent of the WCG's legalism during the 1970s says his response was to pray "for the church to come to a deeper understanding of the grace of God."⁴¹ But, while prayer is certainly important, I cannot agree that it should be the only response. Why is this man mentioned in a positive light in *Christianity Today* instead of asking how he could have remained silent while following directives from headquarters and drawn a paycheck while the WCG continued to preach legalism and various other heresies; denounce the Gospel of grace as a deception; call Christians "instruments of Satan"; use members' tithe money on extravagant living for top officials; and spiritually blind, gag, and abuse its members?

Accompanying Ruth Tucker's article in *Christianity Today* is a small article, "When Your Church Says It's Wrong."⁴² It is written by a long-time WCG member, and is apparently supposed to show how WCG members are turning from legalism to grace. But I have to ask — since apparently no one else has — how this woman can claim to have cleared her mind of all prejudices while remaining in the church she has attended for more than 25 years and while using WCG published study guides and listening to WCG sermons. I must also question how her claim to have cleared her mind of all prejudices and to have an "open mind" is consistent with her statement that she "refused to listen to any rumors or read any 'black marketed' dissident materials."

My criticism is not of these people, who are the product of their church, but with those who hold them up as positive examples without asking critical questions. Dealing only with the leaders can result in an extremely distorted picture — one that may even have been purposely created for the benefit of the observers — and cause great harm to the average member. Likewise, exiting members who know they have been hurt by the present WCG administration, commonly feel betrayed by both the WCG leadership and the Christian ministries that have befriended the WCG. Observers must not forget that the leaders have been in responsible positions in an abusive, authoritarian cult for years and may have compulsive behavioral problems they have not yet faced and which may not be readily apparent to the observer. (Interestingly, David Covington mentions that, when he was still a WCG pastor, the top WCG administration felt they had no need to attend his workshops on spiritual healing.)

Third, I hope the WCG leaders will see that there is more that needs to be changed than they may have realized. Joe Tkach Jr. accuses ministries that have kept the pressure on the WCG of making “the journey [to evangelicalism] ten times more difficult.”⁴³ Why? Because we demand true fruit rather than an image of evangelicalism? (Read Luke 3:8.) Because we know that the possible regeneration of a leader or leaders and the publication of orthodox-sounding articles does not guarantee a spiritually healthy church? Because we want to hold leaders accountable for obvious lies and spiritual abuse?

We have not made the journey any more difficult than it needs

to be. Any unnecessary difficulty may instead arise from leaders duplicitously manipulating members and the media to fit a man-made agenda rather than putting their full trust in Jesus Christ.

Yes, we have inflicted faithful wounds (Proverbs 27:6) and will continue to do so until the WCG demonstrates true accountability and forthrightness and stops leaving a trail of abused people in its wake.⁴⁴

Endnotes:

1. Hank Hanegraaff, “Dear Co-laborer in Christ” letter, October 6, 1995. “The ‘Uncult’: Back to the Bible,” *Impact*, July 1996, pg. 2.
2. David Covington, resignation letter to pastor general Joseph Tkach Jr., May 11, 1996.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Some both in and outside the WCG have lately been referring to a 1939 *Good News* article in which Armstrong condemned centralized, hierarchical government. They see this as the “inspired” Armstrong position from which he later drifted. What they fail to see is that Armstrong wrote this article to justify the autonomy he declared for his group of followers after he severed his ties with the Church of God (Seventh Day) headquartered in Salem, West Virginia. When the Salem church was no longer a threat to his plan for his church, Armstrong set himself as the head of his own hierarchical, centralized government and condemned congregational and presbyterian forms of church government.
7. Ruth Tucker also gives the impression “a board of directors now leads the church.” “From the Fringe to the Fold,” *Christianity Today*, July 15, 1996, pg. 32.
8. *Ambassador Report*, April 1995, pp. 4-6. On pg. 4 it mentions, “such documents are considered so top secret they are stored in a multilocked vault and without special clearance even top ministers are not permitted to see them. For that reason, we are very pleased that one WCG insider recently provided us with a copy of [the bylaws].”
9. Ibid. pg. 6.
10. WCG home page on the Internet, May 22, 1996.
11. Letter of May 24, 1996, on file.

12. Letter of February 2, 1996, on file.
13. Richard Rice, e-mail message to David Covington, May 3, 1996.
14. Covington resignation letter.
15. Letter of August 8, 1995, on file.
16. “From the Fringe...”, pg. 30, as quoted from the March-April 1996 *Plain Truth*.
17. Letter of January 25, 1996, on file.
18. Joseph Tkach, Co-worker letter, February 26, 1996, and “The High Cost of Following Christ,” *Worldwide News*, March 12, 1996, as quoted in Covington’s resignation letter.
19. “The High Cost...”
20. Mike Feazell, *Worldwide News*, March 12, 1996, as quoted in Covington’s resignation letter.
21. Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton, *Toxic Faith*, (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1991), pp. 257-260.
22. Letter of September 27, 1995, on file.
23. Covington resignation letter.
24. Ibid.
25. “The High Cost...”
26. Covington resignation letter.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse*, (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pg. 114.
31. David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1991), pg. 78.
32. Letter of March 8, 1996, on file.
33. Letter of May 28, 1996, on file.
34. Covington resignation letter.
35. Letter of April 8, 1996, on file.
36. Covington resignation letter.
37. David Covington, letter to Greg Albrecht, June 14, 1996.
38. Carrol E. Miller and David G. Hunsberger, letters to Peter Ditzel, August 21, 1995, and September 7, 1995.
39. Covington resignation letter.
40. Ibid.
41. “From the Fringe...”, pg. 32.
42. “When Your Church Says It’s Wrong,” *Christianity Today*, July 15, 1996, pg. 29.
43. “From the Fringe...”, pg. 32.
44. The WCG’s responses to David Covington’s resignation letter (both the brief response on the Internet and the detailed response from Greg Albrecht in a letter to Janis Hutchinson dated May 31, 1996, demonstrate neither accountability nor forthrightness.

