

Extracts from a defunk website on the Apostasy (2006)

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Post-Armstrong Doctrinal Changes

In order to be honest to the historical record of Herbert W. Armstrong, no account would be complete without including some material that documents how those who succeeded him have related to his system of beliefs and to his legacy. The best way to do so is to permit these people to speak for themselves as to the pace and openness of doctrinal changes and to why some of them came to view Armstrong's teachings as heresy. The material on this page lets you read and hear for yourself what those people and those who assisted them have to say about Armstrong and his teachings.

Just prior to his death in January 1986, Herbert Armstrong appointed Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. as Pastor General. On the afternoon of Saturday December 17, 1994 Mr. Tkach gave a sermon in Atlanta, Georgia which would later be regarded as the turning point in the church's "official" teachings and mark the beginning of the open and rapid process of repudiating the teachings of Herbert Armstrong.

In May of 1995 while undergoing gall bladder surgery it was determined that Tkach had pervasive and inoperable cancer. He appointed his son, Joseph W. Tkach, Jr. to succeed him upon his death which occurred at 2:20 PM PST on the afternoon of Saturday September 23, 1995. [they denied that he was ill for several months thereafter]

The astute reader will notice that from the day the senior Tkach publicly repudiated the belief system expounded by Armstrong until he died was exactly 40 weeks, indeed almost to the very hour, given allowance for the time zones. One correspondent said of Tkach's condition, "[h]e died a horrible death. In the end there were horrible sores on his body and legs that could not be stopped from bleeding. People who came in to see him burst into tears at the sight."

1991 Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Presentation

Click [here](#) to listen to a 35 minute presentation by David Hulme, as an official representative, explaining the doctrines of the Worldwide Church of God to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. In his own words, he was "invited to explain what our position is on a number of things and also to perhaps update you on a number of changes." (at 0:15) and wanted to "take you through some of the present thinking then, of the Worldwide Church of God..." (at 0:53) and "take you through some of the more important changes that have occurred in the past four to five years" (at 4:38). The audio has a rather high background noise level. The listener might carefully compare his explanations of church doctrines with Armstrong's own words and writings elsewhere on this CDROM.

Click [here](#) for the excerpt (3:20 long) of this presentation dealing with "some of the [recent official church] statements about the Trinity."

See [Editor's Comments](#) at bottom of the page.

Understanding the Nature of God

In the middle of 1993, the leadership of the WCG moved to finalize the major doctrinal change of rejecting Armstrong's position that God was a type of family and to adopt the Trinity. So, it was decided to convene a series of ministerial conferences where the new doctrines could be explained. "Let's teach all our ministry first, where we were wrong, that the Trinity was right, then we'll teach the membership," Joe Tkach, Jr. later recounted to an evangelical convention in October of 1998. He also said that once this teaching was introduced, that it was like "placing a brick on the accelerator" and the pace of doctrinal change spun out of their control, thus leading to the Great Worldwide Crackup.

To instruct the ministry and elders in the field on the adoption of the Trinity, the Church's Greek scholar, Dr. K. J. Stavrinides produced a 27 hour video lecture series. The editor has not included this program due to its sheer size, however you are encouraged to spend 16 minutes listening to Joe Tkach, Jr.'s introductory remarks, if not the entire introduction. These remarks are an education in themselves. The editor has included an in-depth written commentary by Frank Nelte, entitled "Contra Stavrinides," which picks apart Dr. Stavrinides' 27-hour lecture point-by-point.

In these sessions, taped in front of a live audience, Stavrinides skillfully deconstructs Armstrong's teachings with a mix of logic, error, subtle and overt assumptions, secular sources and the unwritten rules of his scholarship. His students, being ministers, elders and their wives attending at the request of church management, are completely ill-prepared to mount any meaningful response, nor is any expected or even permitted. It is not until his 1998 interview by televangelist Pat Robertson, that Joe Tkach, Jr. admits the WCG management adopted the Trinity in 1989! In the modern vernacular, this major doctrinal change was already very much a "done deal" when these 1993 lessons were taped. Subsequent events showed that unless a minister accepted these new teachings, he was soon looking for a different job.

In the process of deconstructing Armstrong, Stavrinides also proceeds to construct a building more to his liking but more importantly for what this means to the church, to the liking of his theologian peers. This deconstruction was done by slicing Armstrong's teachings into such small pieces that after discarding the rubble, the pieces that are left are used to build a Trinitarian edifice, even though the pieces now require far more mortar of non-biblical origin than Armstrong ever used. The errors in Armstrong's teachings were highlighted and the truths largely ignored in an effort to establish the credibility of the deconstruction process. "Don't confuse the Bible with theology," Stavrinides warns his students early on and then proceeds to use theology to explain the God of the Bible.

This all boils down to a very fancy method to explain away the plain text of the Bible. Worse, it is a very fancy method of saying that the Scriptures, which The Savior Himself said "cannot be broken" (John 10:35) and Paul said were "God breathed" and "able to make you wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15-17) are not sufficient by themselves for salvation, because they can only be "properly understood" with the help of theology.

It reminds the editors of the old Marx Brothers Vaudeville joke, "Who are you going to believe, what I'm telling you or your lying eyes?"

During his Introduction to these videos, Joe Tkach, Jr. warned his employees who would be viewing them that they should not let the "old paradigm" get in the way of having an open mind about this material. And they should not pay any attention to any scripture that might suddenly pop into their mind which contradicted the lesson. The listener be advised that the effort to persuade the church to accept the teachings on these videos has caused many to stumble and lose their reward. This series was strictly for the ministry only and was not to be released to the membership.

- [Joseph Tkach, Jr. Introduction](#) (15:52)

Contra Stavrinides

In 1993 the Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. oversaw the introduction of a series of changes to the church's fundamental doctrines. As part of this change Dr. Kyriacos J. Stavrinides produced 27 hours of lecture on video tape entitled "Understanding the Nature of God". Contra Stavrinides was written by minister Frank Nelte to detail his objections to the doctrinal implications of Stavrinides' lecture material.

This section concludes with a few articles from Armstrong's critics on the changes made after his passing

Tkach's Atlanta Sermon given December 17, 1994

Click [here](#) to read Tkach's Atlanta sermon, where he introduced what came to be called the "new understanding", or "NU" of the church's fundamental doctrines. The editors downloaded this transcript from the WCG web site.

Christianity Today Article

Click [here](#) to read *From the Fringe to the Fold, How the Worldwide Church of God discovered the plain truth of the gospel* by Ruth Tucker. The article appeared in the July 15, 1996 issue of Christianity Today. Tucker is a leading figure in the "cult-watch" movement. This article is obviously endorsed by the WCG as it was reprinted in its official member newspaper, the *Worldwide News*

The Worldwide Church of God: From Cult to Christianity

Click [here](#), to read Appendix A from pages 471 to 473, of *Kingdom of the Cults*, by Walter Martin (BethanyHouse Publishers, 1997). The late Dr. Martin was founder of the Christian Research Institute, and original host of The Bible Answer Man radio broadcast. He was succeeded by Hank Hanegraaff. This updated appendix replaces the 1985 edition's chapter 12, "Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God--Anglo-Israelism."

Most telling quote from article (speaking of Joseph Tkach, Sr.): "He reversed Armstrong's most damnable doctrines in full acceptance of the Trinity, Christ's divinity and humanity, the person and deity of the Holy Spirit, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and salvation by grace through faith alone."

The Worldwide Church of God: Acknowledging the 'Plain Truth' about the Trinity?

Click [here](#), to read the article from page 29 of the Spring/Summer 1994 edition of the *Christian Research Journal*, a publication of Hank Hanegraaff's Christian Research Institute. This article describes the basis for the rejection of Armstrong's teachings about the nature of God.

Worldwide Church of God Update: Tkach Clarifies 'Sabbath' and 'True Church' Doctrines

Click [here](#), to read the very detailed article from a 1995 edition of the cult-watch magazine, *The Watchman Expositor* about the history of doctrinal change.

Changes in WCG Doctrines of the Trinity and the Only True Church

Click [here](#), to read another article on WCG doctrinal changes from *The Watchman Expositor*. Note the reference to correspondence dated August, 1992 which the *Watchman* called "a major shift from the teaching of the church's founder..." The *Watchman* dates the WCG's official acceptance of the Trinity from a September 23, 1993 letter from David Hunsberger, of the Personal Correspondence Department.

The Worldwide Church Of God: A Time for Sober Thought

Click [here](#), to read an article by Phillip Arnn about the doctrinal changes of the Worldwide Church of God. The exact date of the article or its source are unknown, but it probably came from *The Watchman Expositor*.

Did WCG leaders have a doctrinal agenda?

Click [here](#), to read the article *Did WCG leaders have a doctrinal agenda?* from the Aug. 25, 1995, issue of *In Transition*, a publication that supports those who did not accept the doctrinal changes made by the WCG leadership after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong.

[Here is a list](#) composed by Dave Pack, listing all of the doctrinal changes WCG leadership had made as of 1993. This shows just to what extent the truth was attacked by Mr. Tkach and his cohorts before the sermon given in Atlanta.

[1993 Truths That Transform Broadcast](#) In this 1993 program, Dr. James Kennedy interviews Phillip Arnn of the cult-watch group, *Watchmen Fellowship* about the move by the WCG to accept the doctrine of the Trinity. This half hour broadcast is included because it confirms in great detail that despite denying that any doctrinal changes were being made, in fact changes were in the works as early as 1988. Further, that the key doctrinal change of moving the church openly towards the Trinity

had now become sufficiently visible that Phillip Arnn was now reassured the change was really taking place.

These are two salient excerpts from his 1993 interview:

- [Excerpt](#) Phillip Arnn: Doctrinal changes 180 degrees opposite from traditional church teachings; leadership feared loss of members; "just explaining the old doctrines in a different way."
- [Excerpt](#) Kennedy asks Arnn about the WCG telling "counter-cult ministries" one thing about doctrinal changes and telling the membership something else. Note his passing mention of 1988.

Bible Answer Man Interview of Tom Lapacka This was broadcast on January 24 and 25, 2002. Lapacka was interviewed by Hank Hanegraaff. Lapacka was a member of the WCG leadership in Pasadena and was the pastor of the headquarters' congregation during the period of massive doctrinal change. Subsequently, he left the WCG and at the time of this interview is an official of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

This interview is included because it thoroughly illustrates the great gulf between followers of the "orthodox" Christian belief system, and that advanced by Armstrong. This gulf is so great the editors ask the listener to notice how often in these two programs that Hanegraaff and Lapacka disenfranchise people who accept what Armstrong taught. The unspoken implication being that they are damned. Lapacka felt this so strongly that after he left his job as a pastor, he was re-baptised as a Lutheran.

- January 24, 2002 Broadcast. [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#)
- January 25, 2002 Broadcast. [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#)

[Tactical Issues](#) Lapacka answers a question about "tactical issues", which was the term used for the problem facing the WCG leadership in 1993-94, before any doctrinal changes were acknowledged or announced, where they were consulting with Hanegraaff and others on how to proceed in order to "not galvanize [existing church membership] around splinter groups." Lapacka says the question facing those "enlightened in the leadership, those who had come clearly to the Cross of Christ", was "...how do we begin to move these people to the Cross, out of the shadows into the light of truth in the Son of God?"

[How important is the Trinity?](#) Lapacka says that when he denied the Trinity, he did not understand God, and that Armstrong taught "rank heresy."

[Book Ad](#) In this one minute radio ad for Lapacka's book, Out of the Shadows, the editors would like to draw the listener to two points: 1) that several of the members of the WCG's leadership have attempted to make money and secure approval from their evangelical peers by writing books that explain their involvement in the Great Worldwide Crackup; 2) the language that is used to describe the WCG before it's "transformation", using such terms as "spiritual fraud", "mind control", and "subversion of the gospel."

Joe Tkach, Jr. on The 700 Club In the spring of 1998, Pastor General Joe Tkach, Jr. was a guest on the widely viewed television religious talk show, The 700 Club, hosted by Pat Robertson. These are two salient excerpts from that interview.

- [Excerpt](#) The Trinity doctrine was accepted by the church leadership in 1989.
- [Excerpt](#) HWA only asked Joe Tkach, Sr. to specifically examine the healing doctrine. This request has been expanded over time by the WCG leadership and used as a public excuse to reject all of Armstrong's teachings.
- [Complete](#) The complete interview.

[A Chart of the Splits from WCG Since 1997](#)

Editor's comments on David Hulme's 1991 presentation and doctrinal changes. [Hulme later recanted of this though]

After Herbert Armstrong's death in 1986, the church continued the appearance of doctrinal fidelity and stability under its new Pastor General, Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. However hints and rumors of impending doctrinal changes started to surface. As these rumors turned into fact, people left the church to fellowship elsewhere. In examining this history, the editors would ask the reader to remain focused on this one constant: that people left the Worldwide Church of God based upon what its leadership said and did at the time, not how someone might explain or justify those same events today.

The Hulme presentation is important because he was 1) an official church spokesman 2) invited to present church teachings 3) to a group of theologians who taught doctrines diametrically opposite those of Herbert Armstrong and 4) he states twice within the first three minutes of the presentation that what he has to say represents the "present thinking" of the church.

During his presentation, Hulme read from a paper written by "our Greek scholar, K. J. Stavriniades" and published in the January-February 1991 edition of *Reviews You Can Use*, an official WCG publication distributed only to its ministry. Since Hulme earlier makes reference to this paper by saying, "[w]e recently issued a new paper on the subject of the Trinity which was drafted by a senior church minister" and "we've published a fairly scholarly paper on the Trinity", there should be no doubt whatsoever that the paper represented the thinking of the senior church leadership and was published with their cooperation and approval.

After introducing a new section of his presentation with "[s]ome of the statements about the Trinity ...", Hulme quotes from Stavriniades' paper which includes this key passage, "[e]ven though the Worldwide Church of God considers some positions on the Trinity to be heretical, for example all forms of Arianism ..." The importance of this passage in the history of doctrinal change must be understood and should not be underestimated.

Suppose a farmer sells apples from a roadside stand for 10 cents each. If the farmer points to his only pile of apples and tells a customer, "Some of the apples in this pile are rotten, for example this really smelly one", by implication the customer knows that the remaining apples are still for sale. The farmer's simple and direct statement is about only some of the apples being considered, but not all. The problem is easily solved by picking through the pile and avoiding the rotten ones. But if all the apples in the pile were rotten, the farmer would tell the customer to come back another day when he has some saleable apples.

Likewise the passage that Hulme quotes makes a simple direct statement: some positions are in error. He even gives an extreme example. By its very construction, it also implies that some positions are not in error. If all the positions on the Trinity were considered to be in error, he would have said so instead.

Some may suggest that the word "trinity" was merely a substitution for the subject or concept of "the nature of God". That is contrary to Armstrong's teachings, the culture of the church and contrary to the definition of the words. It also implies the passage was carelessly worded. On the contrary, the passage was painstakingly worded by its author, who was a college professor and scholar with several post-graduate degrees, one from the University of London, and who studied under Christopher Evens, Professor of the New Testament of King's College, University of London and whose web biography states that he "...made original contributions to the Catholic-Protestant dialogue..." Given the official context in which the passage was published, a context Hulme mentions at least twice, the wording can only indicate that the leadership of the church had already accepted the Trinity doctrine in general, even if they were still working through the specifics.

All this is beside the point that Hulme introduced this section of his presentation as being on the subject of "some of the statements about the Trinity". That is, statements by the church and its leadership that Hulme officially represents, on the Trinity.

Herbert Armstrong taught that the doctrine of the Trinity was false. The church taught it was false. The members believed it was false. Some six months after Stavriniades wrote about the Trinity in his article, the church published a list of church doctrines on page 4 of the July 22, 1991 issue of the *Worldwide News*, an official church publication for its members. (Click [here](#) to read entire list.) These doctrinal statements are in agreement with Armstrong's teachings and church member belief. Two doctrines

relating to the Trinity are listed, "[w]e do not believe the doctrine of the Trinity." and "[w]e do not believe the Holy Spirit is a third person in the Godhead."

As with the Hulme quote of the January Stavrinides paper, the July Worldwide News statement says one thing directly: we do not believe in the Trinity. That necessarily implies that all positions on the Trinity are rejected. There is no qualification or exception- all forms of the Trinity are in error or else the statement would have been phrased differently.

Just before his death, Herbert Armstrong wrote the *Mystery of the Ages*, a book that Joseph Tkach, Sr. called "probably the greatest work that he has accomplished" in the Tribute to Herbert Armstrong telecast that was shown the week after Armstrong's death (listen to this soundbite from the [MOA Intro](#)). Under the subject of "Trinity", the index of the 1985 hardback edition published by Dodd, Mead and Company lists:

- a doctrine that destroys the very gospel of Jesus, 51
- a word not found in the Bible, 40, 54
- by it Satan has deceived all traditional Christianity, 51
- false scripture added to Bible to bolster doctrine of, 55
- false teaching that limits God to three Persons, 44-45
- how introduced by Satan into "Christianity", 51-52
- not supported in any early Greek New Testament manuscript, 55
- originated in the latter half of the second century, 54
- the doctrine of the great false religion called "Mystery, Babylon the great", 51

For example, in Chapter 1, Who and What is God?, Armstrong wrote:

"Many think God is a single individual supreme Personage. Some thought he was a spirit. But the generally accepted teaching of traditional Christianity is that God is a Trinity - God in 3 Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which they call a Ghost. The word trinity is not found in the Bible, nor does the Bible teach this doctrine." (page 40)

"No third person is mentioned -no "Ghost". Is God then limited to only 2 Persons? The false Trinity teaching does limit God to 3 Persons. But God is not limited. As God repeatedly reveals, his purpose is to reproduce himself into what may well become billions of God persons. It is the false Trinity teaching that limits God, denies God's purpose and has palpably deceived the whole Christian world. Both God and the Word themselves are spirit and project their spirit." (page 44)

"The Trinity doctrine limits God to a supposed 3 Persons. It destroys the very gospel of Jesus Christ! His gospel is the good news of the now soon coming Kingdom of God -the only hope of this world and its mixed up mankind!" (page 51)

[Editor's note: After Armstrong's death, his *Mystery of the Ages* was quietly withdrawn from distribution. The reason given was that Armstrong had stated it contained some errors. This is not consistent with Tkach's laudatory inclusion of the book in the Tribute broadcast, a broadcast in which a softcover edition of the book was offered free to any listener. Nor did Armstrong himself find it necessary to mention the issue of errors during his own ten minute discussion of the book during the sermon he gave on April 16, 1985. Other sources say Armstrong told them that the errors could be addressed by making a few notes in the margins of their copies of the book. That is a far cry from a level of error requiring withdrawal. Most publishers just issue an errata sheet. Joe Tkach, Jr. sheds more light on this issue during his presentation on October 4, 1988 at the EMNR conference (see above), as well as during his spring 1998 interview on Pat Roberson's 700 Club television talk show (Click [here](#) to listen to excerpt). There he said that the only doctrine Armstrong mentioned specifically by name that needed changing was the one about healing and the use of medicine and doctors. It is obvious that the issue of minor errors was used by the church leadership as a cover for their major disagreement with the theological concepts Armstrong expressed in the book.]

In reality, not only did Armstrong and the church teach that the Trinity was a false doctrine, but in the culture of the church, in WCG-Speak, the Trinity was always talked about as a false doctrine. It was never mentioned as being anything else but false. In almost 30 years of membership, the editors had never once heard the word "trinity" used favorably by either members or ministers. So, it can only be a

signal event when this subject is officially treated in a church publication in a manner that states that only some forms of it are in error.

When Hulme was preparing his presentation to the Trinitarians, he had to choose what he would say and what he would not say, the words he would quote and those he wouldn't. You can expect that at the very least he asked for guidance from his management and was operating under their guidance if not directly, then indirectly through his knowledge of the general management philosophy. He was certainly not speaking as on his own, as a private person, who just happened to be fellowshipping on Saturday over at Worldwide, for at no time during his presentation did he note that anything he said was his own personal position as opposed to the church's position. The audio record shows Hulme chose to quote a then recent Stavrinides paper the church had published for its ministers, but not made available to church membership. He did not quote a single passage of any of Armstrong's widely available writings on the nature of God (such as from the Chapter 1 of Mystery of the Ages, or lesson 20 of the 58 lesson Bible Correspondence Course) or a single passage on the nature of God from any of his over 50 years of daily radio broadcasts (since the first Sunday of 1934), sermons or Bible Studies.

Phillip Arnn, writing in the cult-watch magazine "Watchman Expositor", in an article titled, "Changes in WCG Doctrines of the Trinity and the Only True Church" (see above) after quoting from the same Stavrinides paper, wrote:

"Although the church now viewed the Trinity doctrine as a "genuine attempt" to describe God, they did accept the doctrine."

How clear can the situation be? A third party reports that the leadership had accepted the Trinity, thus rejecting Armstrong's teaching on the subject. In a Spring, 1998 interview on The 700 Club, an Evangelical Christian television talk show hosted by Pat Robertson, Joe Tkach, Jr. said that the church leadership had accepted the Trinity in 1989 (Click [here](#) to listen to excerpt). Why then did that same management publish a clearly contradictory doctrinal statement to its members nonetheless in the July 1991 Worldwide News?. These seeming contradictions of doctrine, public statements and action by the church leadership became the hallmark of this era of the Church of God. But in the opinion of the editors, these contradictions are easily explained if the issue before the church leadership was not whether to accept the Trinity, but how and when to best introduce it to the membership.

As of this writing, some nine years later in early 2000, the WCG states in "A Brief History of the Worldwide Church of God", "[i]n 1993, the church accepted the doctrine of the Trinity." Also as of this writing, from its Statement of Beliefs, the WCG states that "God ... is one divine being in three eternal co-essential, yet distinct Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit ..."

Given these facts, it is natural to conclude that by 1991 the church was giving its critics clear signals of the doctrinal changes that had already been accepted by the church leadership, all the while speaking in a manner designed to not alarm those who held to the beliefs that Armstrong expounded. Several years later the validity of the editor's conclusion about this approach to the introduction of significant doctrinal changes is born out in an August 3, 1993 letter from David Hulme, then Director of Communications and Public Affairs, to James K. Walker, Director, Watchman Fellowship (a cult-watch organization, publisher of the Watchman Expositor and critic of Armstrong), in which Hulme worries to Walker about how WCG members would react to a forthcoming Expositor article on WCG doctrinal changes:

"If they get a misrepresentation from you ..., some might run to the splinter groups. You already know that, because you name some of them in your lay-out. Even so, you are prepared to circumvent our ability to make a wise announcement and presentation to the members. You are topedoing the efforts of the Church to present the truth in the right way."

Walker responds in a letter dated August 5, 1993:

"It is amazing. We are criticized for reporting information about the church that is outdated and "too old". Now we are criticized for publishing information that is "too new".

"... If your concern on this issue was the timing of our article, why were you not upfront with me when I called you? When I first discussed this with you, you should have said, "James, ... we are in the process of sharing this with our members. Would you hold off on this story for a month or two to give

us a chance to better explain it to our people?..." Only "after the fact" did you introduce the idea that the timing of our article may cause some problem for the church."

Yet more validation is evidenced even later when Pastor General Joe Tkach, Jr. complained during his October 1998 presentation at the EMNR conference (see above, especially sound bites) about the problems of "leading our people out of the error [of Armstrongism]" without causing them to bolt for the exits.

The editors have been awestruck by the pattern and practice of the church leadership of making doctrinal changes while at the same time vigorously denying to the membership that any changes had really taken place, or were being planned. This led many members to accuse the leadership and their supporters of either expediency (for gradually repudiating Armstrong's teachings while not trying to alienate the dwindling number of members still faithful to those very teachings- who were still faithfully tithing and providing the bulk of the church income), duplicity (for having a doctrinal agenda they refused to disclose), or violating their fiduciary responsibilities (for making doctrinal changes while not responsibly anticipating the consequences of those changes). In any case, the vast majority of church members left to fellowship elsewhere, and they took their wallets with them, an exodus that one ex-member fittingly called The Great Worldwide Crackup. At the beginning of his presentation, Hulme noted that the church had 145,000 people meeting in 780 congregations in 120 countries. As of this writing, the church has less than 20,000 members and is in the process of selling all its major capital assets.

Herbert Armstrong never claimed to have "invented" the belief system he expounded. He stated over and over that he was attempting to teach the very same belief system expounded by The Savior Jesus Christ and the original Apostles. As quoted from his book, *Mystery of the Ages*, he rejected and debunked the doctrine of the Trinity and taught that the Holy Spirit is God's power or essence, and not a separate self-aware "person" with its own perception, thoughts, knowledge and free will. (Also see the articles, *Satan's Great Deception* and *Is God a "Trinity"?* in the Booklets and Articles section.) Further, the beliefs that Armstrong expounded taught that God was an open ended family, while the Trinity doctrine pictures God as a closed "hypostasis". Thus, acceptance of the Trinity subsequently necessitates rejection of the teaching that God is reproducing himself as well as the view of God's plan of salvation that mankind would become heirs with Christ.

The Trinitarian belief system developed by the Catholic Church and adopted by Protestant Christianity holds that God is not a family that humans can be born into. In its place, the belief system teaches that all humans have an immortal soul from birth, if not from conception. When a person dies, their immortal soul continues to exist for all eternity. The only question is where that eternity will be spent, in heaven or in hell? If even the most unbelieving and evil sinner already has eternal life because his soul is immortal, even if it is immortal in hell, what is the role of The Savior, Jesus Christ? Conversely, what does The Savior do for a person who accepted Him during his lifetime and lead an exemplary life of sacrifice and obedience? What is the meaning of the "hope of the resurrection" for a person who already has an immortal soul? How can you bring someone back to life who does not die?

And what of the infant who was murdered a few days after being born on some South Sea island hundreds of years before Christ lived? Does this person need a savior or not? Scripture says that Christ is humanity's only Savior. (Acts 4:12). Trinitarians always find some way to excuse and permit the granting of salvation to these people despite the impossibility of their having accepted Christ due to the circumstances of their lives. Else, through no fault of their own, by this theology, these hapless and unsaved humans must spend all eternity suffering and being punished in hell. Under this doctrine, whole races and nations can never achieve salvation. Objectively, this is the cruelest doctrine ever devised, for the majority of mankind has never had a real chance to know Christ, let alone accept Him and thus are automatically damned forever.

Yet Luke records that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's God-inspired prophesy that all flesh would see salvation. (Luke 3:6). The entire 37th chapter of Ezekiel pictures a future time when people who have been long dead will be given life in the breathing flesh once again (verse 6), and they will "observe my statutes and do them." (verse 24). These two citations directly contradict the doctrine that humans have an immortal soul. The belief system expounded by Herbert Armstrong can explain these apparent puzzles and it shows how all humans who ever lived will have the opportunity to consider God's offer of salvation through Christ. Trinitarians cannot. The best Trinitarians can come up with is to say they believe in "God's righteous judgement", whatever that means for the fate of the otherwise

automatically damned person and whatever that means in relationship to God's written word, whose author Himself said "cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Trinitarians thus have an entirely different view on the issues of the necessity of receiving the Holy Spirit after baptism, God's judgement, the need for a resurrection, the reward of the saved, the reward of those not saved, of the role of the saved in God's future, of the role of God in the future of those saved. Indeed, a entirely different view even of the very nature of humans and the necessity for Christ's sacrifice, for if humans already possess an immortal soul how does Christ facilitate the granting of eternal life? In short, a totally different view on the entirety of God's relationship with mankind. Therefore, the issue of whether the Holy Spirit is a self-aware "person" and whether God is a Trinity or not was and will forever continue to be at the heart and core of the differences between Armstrong's teachings and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church as adopted by Protestant Christianity.

Lastly, as surely as night follows day, adoption of the Trinity quickly leads to the rejection of God's Law, and thus the knowledge of what is sin (Romans 3:20, 1 John 3:4), which is what separates man from God (Isaiah 59:2). So, despite Tkach's [denials](#) that they were planning to "do away with the law", once the Trinity was accepted by the WCG leadership, that is exactly what happened.

Herbert Armstrong was right, the Trinity doctrine destroys the gospel message of Jesus Christ. And it was the doctrine of the Trinity that Satan used to destroy the most significant organization in 1900 years to preach the same gospel that was preached by Jesus Christ, the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.