

The Worldwide Church of God:

**A study of its transformation
in terms of K. Helmut Reich's theory of
Relational and Contextual Reasoning.**

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Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology)**

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Certificate of Originality

I certify that this thesis is entirely my own work,
and that sources have been duly acknowledged,
and that inclusive language has been used wherever possible,
and that this thesis has not been submitted for a
higher degree at any other institution.

Johannes L.F. Buchner
23 March 2005.

Amended version submitted following examination.

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27 February 2006.

Acknowledgments and Dedication

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I dedicate this thesis to
Elizabeth Madsen, Mary Bouchier, and Pascha-Rose Buchner,
beloved mother; sister; and daughter.

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Abstract

In the history of the Christian religion there may be no parallel to the Worldwide Church of God's radical transformation from a marginal sect to a recognized denomination. Formed around Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986), the sect became one of the largest religious media ministries, offering the Plain Truth magazine and the World Tomorrow radio and television programs. After Armstrong's death, the sect was headed by Joseph W. Tkach who, before his own death in 1996, reformed some beliefs and practices. He was succeeded by his son, Joseph Tkach, who renounced the sect's dependence on Armstrong's teachings. A significant issue in this transformation was the Worldwide Church of God's adoption of the Christian Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The cognitive developmental theories of Karl Helmut Reich, of Switzerland, outlined in his book *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), are related to the application of the idea of complementarity, drawn from quantum physics, to the resolution of paradoxical ideas, with some reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. From these considerations arose a theory of "relational and contextual reasoning" which could be applied as a psychological approach to studying the transformation of the Worldwide Church of God, in particular its leaders. A survey instrument, following Reich's protocols, was administered to 13 Worldwide Church of God leaders. For contextual and comparative purposes, in terms of Reich's theory, a large number of publications produced by the church in its pre-transformation phase and also by a number of schismatic groups were studied

The focus of this research was on how these leaders, as change agents, were able to demonstrate development of their thinking (as gauged by their understanding of the Trinity doctrine) according to Reich's stage theory. The same approach was taken with a broad content analysis of literature on the Trinity. The procedure followed a qualitative, hermeneutical analysis. A high rating in Reich's scale was expected to correspond to a more satisfactory understanding of the doctrine, which might serve as a perspective on changes in thinking by Worldwide Church of God leaders. As the first study of this kind, the results were enlightening and raised hope about the ability of Reich's theory to explain the phenomenon studied and also revealed progress in the transformation or conversion of Worldwide Church of God leaders.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Worldwide Church of God and the cognitive conversion of its leaders.

1.1 Why this study?

The transformation in recent years of a marginal religious sect into a recognized Christian denomination in the space of less than a decade has been hailed as an event of historic proportions, comparable to the Protestant Reformation (attributed to Dr James Kennedy and Dr Ruth Tucker, both well-known American evangelical writers; Tkach, 1997, cover). The Worldwide Church of God's background is described below, and in Ankerberg and Weldon (1999, p.1), Mather and Nichols (1993, p.320), Melton (1991, p.34), McCoy (1989, p.10), and Mead (1985, p.260).

The transformation of the Worldwide Church of God (hereafter, WCG) has not been studied in a psychological context, neither has there been a social scientific study of its development, apart from descriptive accounts (Barrett, 2001; Buchner, 1985). Despite its prominence, the WCG has been virtually excluded from mainstream studies of mass media ministries (except for Buchner, 1989). Most of the literature on the WCG has been polemical and perjorative, dealing with theological issues, scandals and grievances by former members (hundreds of items are listed in a bibliography, Buchner, 1983, now out-dated – and numerous websites have commenced in the past decade). Religious responses include Benware (1984), Bestic, 1971; Hopkins (1974), Martin (1985), Sumner (1974), and Tucker (1989). Damaging exposés are rendered by Hinson (1977), McNair (1977), Renehan (1995), Robinson (1980), and Tuit (1981).

Accounts of the WCG's transformation have been given by the WCG's principal change agents (Feazell, 1999, 2001; Tkach, 1997), supported with positive comments by sympathetic outsiders (Johnson and Kramer, 2004; Nichols and Mather, 1998), reflections by former church executives (Lapacka, 2001) and a sprinkling of reviews by the Christian press (Gomes, 1993; Neff, 1995; Trott, 1997), and an avalanche of hostile

papers and discussion on the worldwide web by church dissidents. Their reaction to the WCG transformation overwhelmingly consists of suspicion, anger and ridicule.

“Insider” information provided by former WCG employees and members is difficult to reconcile with the WCG’s self-cultivated positive image.

Despite some controversy over the genuineness of the WCG’s transformation, the present thesis is deliberately neutral, with strict ethical controls, and focuses on the psychological dimension of change, primarily in the understanding of the WCG’s leaders. That is, this study is about the thinking (cognitive) processes that might have been involved in the genesis and implementation of a significant change in the church’s belief system, and more specifically in its understanding of the doctrine of God. The relationship of a revised theology to other individual and corporate changes, such as the experiences of adherents or the dynamics of the organization, will be considered in passing, but this present thesis deals primarily with cognitive development that can be related to religious transformation. Religion is a central and necessary dimension of this study, but it is primarily addressed from a mainstream psychology of religion perspective. Theological issues are inherent in the form and substance of the analysis, but this is not a theological thesis and a non-sectarian approach has been adopted.

The WCG provides a case study for the consideration of the usefulness of a particular theory of cognitive development, devised by Karl Helmut Reich of Switzerland, a prolific contributor to this field albeit under-acknowledged by the wider academic community so far. Therefore this thesis is also a study of a theoretical perspective, which Reich has called “relational and contextual reasoning,” outlined in his *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Reich, 2002b). This perspective (not yet a fully-developed theory) deals with the co-ordination of competing theories about the same phenomenon, but it is also suited to the understanding of complex and paradoxical constructs in thinking. Relational and Contextual Reasoning (RCR) has its origins in “complementarity” (per quantum physics) and in earlier philosophical systems. Its application follows Reich’s dictum that the research approach should coordinate with the structural characteristics of the problem. This applies quite appropriately to the case study. The theory is defined in the next chapter in which an extensive and critical literature review of Reich’s work is given. Analysis of Reich’s perspective is the main concern of this thesis.

1.2 Brief history of the Worldwide Church of God

The WCG was founded in the 1930s in Eugene, Oregon, by Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986). From its humble beginnings as the Radio Church of God it grew into one of the world's largest religious communications enterprises (Abelman & Hoover, 1990; Bruce, 1990; Duke, 1981; Hadden & Swann, 1981; Morris, 1973), publishing the *Plain Truth* magazine, broadcasting the *World Tomorrow* radio and television programs, from its *Ambassador University* headquarters in Pasadena, California. The media ministry was offered in numerous languages other than English, through extensive advertising in *Reader's Digest* magazine. Although most of the WCG congregations are in the United States of America, it has many offices and meeting places around the world. Since its radical changes, the WCG's membership has halved to an estimated 50,000, its income has dropped significantly, it has terminated its mass media operations and sold its lavish campus in Pasadena. The majority of its congregations have moved from Saturday to Sunday meetings, and the denomination is proposing to change its name to "Grace International Communion" (to be confirmed).

The WCG's portrayal of its early history and activities can be found in Armstrong (1986; 1987), Hoeh (1959), Meredith (1963) and WCG (1969). Publicity about its pre-transformation period can be found in WCG (1989; 1994). To the outside world, Armstrong was generally regarded as a "false prophet" and his church ignored as a "cult" by mainstream Christianity. Nevertheless, before his death Armstrong was honoured by a number of dignitaries for his humanitarian work, with the WCG's Ambassador Foundation, on his frequent travels around the world (WCG c.1986).

In this thesis, the WCG generally will be referred to as a "sect" prior to – and as a "church" – following its transformation. Although the WCG has applied the term "cult" to its past, it prefers to be regarded as having been at its core an "old covenant" church, wherein beliefs, conduct and identity were rooted in a pre-Christian paradigm (Albert, 1997; Albrecht, 2004). The WCG's beginnings were closely tied to the idiosyncratic intellectual and conversion experiences of its founder (Armstrong, 1986). Armstrong pioneered in the advertising industry but after several setbacks as a businessman, and a move from the Midwest to Oregon, he was confronted in 1926 by his wife's interest in the observance of the seventh day of the week. This drove him to

an intense study of religious topics. Despite his lack of formal education, Armstrong came to definite conclusions about the existence of God, the theory of evolution, church history, and the requirements of Christian conversion and living (Armstrong, 1986).

Following unusual and personal religious experiences, Armstrong at first associated with (and was ordained by) the Church of God (Seventh Day), an early offshoot of the Adventist movement (Coulter, 1983). His acceptance of the theory that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the modern descendants of the “lost tribes of Israel” (Armstrong, 1967) and that much of the Bible was a message reserved for those people in these times, and conflict about church organization, led to tensions with his church (Armstrong, 1986). Armstrong soon assumed that he had a special commission from God to deliver that message and began evangelistic campaigns, started a radio ministry in 1933 and a year later issued a modest version of the *Plain Truth* magazine. In the 1940s, Armstrong identified Adolf Hitler as the “antichrist.” After the war the number of his supporters quickly expanded. Armstrong became dissociated from the Church of God (Seventh Day), and moved to Pasadena, California, to start Ambassador College.

The new liberal arts college eventually spread to campuses in Texas and in England, and was intended to supply the necessary personnel for Armstrong’s growing media work and to pastor churches being raised world-wide from dedicated Plain Truth readers and the audiences of the World Tomorrow radio and television programs. The WCG claimed a growth rate of 25-30% per year during the 1950s and 1960s. This rapid expansion, together with a sense of urgency about the end of the world, expected in the early 1970s, and fuelled by growing social unrest in the late 1960s, may have increased the extremism of views and values held by WCG adherents, and certainly attracted negative assessments from mainstream denominations and secular commentators. Many of these criticisms were of the WCG’s theology and modus operandi. Nevertheless, despite the extensive media activities, promoted under the name of Ambassador College, the WCG remained an obscure sect and many members of the public had no idea that a religious sect was behind the “secular” appearing broadcasts presented by Armstrong’s son and heir-apparent, Garner Ted Armstrong (1930-2003).

The WCG members, however, were in a high-demand, secluded religious environment, anticipating the downfall of Western society, famine, plagues and

martyrdom, with the expectation that they would be removed to a “place of safety” (ostensibly the caves of Petra, Jordan) in January 1972, prior to the destruction of the United States by a revived Roman Catholic-led Nazified Europe (Armstrong, 1952). Many members had endured years of heavy donations to the church (triple tithing in some years), rejection of medical treatment, the breaking up of second marriages due to divorce prohibitions, neglect of further education, and heavy-handed interference in their personal lives by WCG ministers rigidly applying literalistic interpretations of the Bible, in order to prepare for this crisis in history. Members were disillusioned with Armstrong’s prophetic credentials when the assumed time of Tribulation was delayed. For this reason and due to other doctrinal disputes, the WCG lost many members in the mid 1970s. At the same time, negative media attention resulted from moral scandals involving the founder’s son, Garner Ted Armstrong, the well-known televangelist (Crews, 1976; Edwards, 1978; Martin, 1970, 1973, 1980; Williams, 1973).

Herbert Armstrong’s first wife died in 1967, of bowel cancer without medical intervention, but in 1987 Armstrong married his much younger secretary, had increasing health problems, and moved to Arizona from where he continued his world tours in the WCG’s executive jetliner (Tuit, 1981). The organization came under closer control of Armstrong’s legal adviser, Stanley Rader, who converted from Judaism upon taking on a more prominent role. Internecine conflicts with Rader and his inner circle, and continuing moral lapses, led to Garner Ted Armstrong’s final expulsion. The elder Armstrong refused to reconcile with his son, who now formed his own Church of God, International, based in Texas (CGI, 1978). At the height of the Jonestown-inspired anti-cult hysteria, WCG dissidents instigated a legal assault on the WCG, based on allegations of financial misconduct, and the WCG was temporarily put into receivership by the California Attorney-General in 1979 (Kelley, 1980; Rader, 1980).

The elder Armstrong resumed control in the early 1980s, reversing many of the reforms of his son’s administration. At the same time, there were revelations of the senior Armstrong’s own private behaviour and a messy divorce from his second wife (Robinson, 1980; Trechak, 1984). Many members simply dropped out or gravitated towards one of the sects founded by former senior Armstrong officials. In his final years, Armstrong intensified his commitment to his main message, published as *Mystery of the Ages* (Armstrong, 1985), and was not expected to change despite later claims by

his successor, Joseph W. Tkach, that Armstrong's final wish was for some change. According to the Evangelical Press News Service (EPNS, 1997, p.1):

Greg Albrecht, editor-in-chief of *The Plain Truth*, added, "There was no doctrinal re-examination or even questions of any kind under Herbert Armstrong, unless it came from his initiative. He believed that he alone set doctrine. He believed that he alone was the apostle and that the ministers and members should simply implement and follow his instructions. There was little chance for any kind of a doctrinal dialogue."

1.3 A Church that Changed

Armstrong died in 1986 (Adams, 1986) and was immediately succeeded by Joseph W. Tkach (1927-1995). During the leadership of Tkach Senior, from 1986 to 1995, and then his son, Joseph Tkach Jr. (born 1951), there were a number of revisions to WCG doctrines, culminating in what might loosely be described as a paradigm shift in the WCG's beliefs and identity. The Tkachs have been credited with bringing the WCG out of its cult status and into a respected position in mainstream Christianity (Tucker, 1996). However, the WCG lost more than half of its clergy and membership and continues to deal with the dynamics of change to ensure its continuation as a distinctive church. There are varying accounts of the reasons for the changes and the circumstances of their implementation, and these accounts continue to be lively topics of discussion among those who defected or were excommunicated.

The accounts of dissidents and entrenched religious conservatives, full of suspicion about the WCG leaders' motives and credibility (for example, Stuhlman, n.d.; Sumner, 2000) are difficult to reconcile with the new WCG persona. Foreshadowing the discussion on complementarity in Chapter 2, this is a case of where, seen from the WCG perspective, the changes are authentic and grounded in an unblemished record of integrity; but from the dissidents' perspective, some of which involves first-hand knowledge of the WCG's inside operations at the time of the changes, the WCG leadership stands accused of duplicity. Nevertheless, the consensus among evangelical church commentators is that the WCG leaders have undergone a genuine transformation

or conversion (Hanegraaf, 2000; Shubin, 1998; Dean, 1997; National Association of Evangelicals, 1997; Wooding, n.d.). .

The present study is an investigation of changed thinking in individuals, particularly the WCG leaders. Churches, as organizations, may be transformed as their members undergo psychological changes, the direction of that change aligned with their members' cognitive processes and expressed in new beliefs and identities. The late twentieth century saw radical changes in the disposition of Christian churches in the West. Whilst authoritarian institutions were growing (Kelley, 1977), and there was a rise in the incidence of fundamentalism (Marty & Appleby, 1991) and high-demand religions (Dawson, 2003), churches which were more inclusive and broad-based in belief and practice were actually losing members. Those churches that sought to survive in this situation were inclined to emphasise their distinctive character, in response to people's need to be different (Malony, 1998). Whilst the WCG consolidates its dwindling membership and finances, and has an uncertain future, those who left to form sects that continued the founder's vision are continuing to increase their membership and income (Malony, 1998, pp.47-48).

Within this organizational situation, there are a number of psychological issues that need to be addressed. There is the matter of how the membership has coped with relatively sudden change, and the disappointment of discovering they were in a "cult" (this term has been used by WCG officials such as Feazell, 2001, although the term has lost favour in the sociology of religion). However, the introduction of these liberal changes was the doing of the WCG's limited circle of leaders, who insist that change was only possible by the use of authoritarian approaches (Tkach, 1997; Feazell, 2001). This is a paradoxical situation, and the matter is further complicated by the co-existence of old and new beliefs during the time of transition, with the possibility of cognitive dissonance in the members who have been swept along with these radical changes. Some continue to struggle with their religious identity (Torger, n.d.).

It is beyond the scope of this present study to examine the condition of the membership, or the sociological dimensions of the WCG's development. It is also difficult, if not inappropriate, to probe the motivations and personality characteristics of the WCG leaders. However, an opportunity has been provided for a study of how the

leadership changed its mind about key doctrines, such changes being pivotal to the transformation of the WCG. Therefore this study is of the WCG leaders' intellectual processes, specifically in terms of their change in understanding of a complex doctrine and how this may be connected to other changes in belief and the formation of a new religious identity. An interesting feature of this transformation is that the leaders' "conversion" preceded that of the clergy and membership, and the new freedoms were imposed, sometimes with difficult outcomes. At the heart of this conversion is the matter of religious identity and worldview.

The psychological direction of the present thesis lies in a cognitive developmental approach, to examine the kind of thinking that might have been instrumental in these changes. The key theorist adopted is Karl Helmut Reich, because his work on complementarity and religious thinking offers an approach to the kind of paradoxical situation operative in the case of the WCG. In fact, Reich (2002b) suggests matching the theory to the problem structure, and the situation of the WCG lends itself well to a Reichian analysis (not to be confused with the work of Wilhelm Reich, the psychoanalyst). Furthermore, investigations of changes in cognitive structure require qualitative, more so than quantitative, data. Therefore the present study is a qualitative analysis of the reasoning processes involved in this change, from the WCG leaders' perspective, in an attempt to critically evaluate the theoretical approach being used.

There have been a number of studies of religious groups moving from an orthodox position to "heretical" and "cultic" status. In recent decades, that could apply to various idealistic groups emerging out of the mainstream, such as Jim Jones' Peoples Temple (Reiterman, 1982) and Elbert Spriggs' Northeast Kingdom Communities (Pardon & Barba, 1995). These, and the experiences of young people moving into sects and cults, have been the subject of widespread investigation. To some extent, such studies are helpful in explaining how the original WCG developed before its transformation, but studies of a sect coming into the mainstream are unusual, although the case of the Seventh Day Adventist Church might be cited (Tucker, 1989, p.116). That church adopted the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity circa 1900, almost a century before it ceased being labelled a sect (Bull & Lockhart, 1989, p.56).

The Seventh Day Adventist Church has experienced internal controversy throughout its history (Brinsmead, 1980; Paxton, 1977; Rea, 1982). Ferguson (n.d.) relates how the writings of Robert Brinsmead (Australian former Adventist, and publisher of Verdict magazine) were influential in the early WCG transformation phase, as WCG officials allegedly drew upon Brinsmead's repudiation of legalism in Christian doctrine, leading to a review of sabbatarianism, although they did not inform the WCG at large about their use of this material. If this is correct, then the WCG changes are partly the result of WCG leaders being persuaded by Brinsmead's arguments. SDA scholar, Samuele Bacchiocchi (1996, p.6) comments on what he feels are misguided motives in the WCG's approach to reformation:

Informed sources believe that these doctrinal changes were influenced by the so-called "Azusa Pacific University theologians," men whom the church had sponsored through graduate degrees in theology and biblical studies, mostly at Azusa Pacific University. The WCG needed qualified teachers to gain accreditation for their Ambassador University. Some of these young theologians became part of Joseph W. Tkach's administrative cabinet. Their avowed goal was to lead their church into the evangelical mainstream by doing away with beliefs such as Sabbath keeping which they considered as vestiges of the Old Covenant.

Sociological theory suggests how "primitive" groups advance towards higher levels of sophistication, organization and community acceptance. In recent times, Jehovah's Witnesses have struggled with modernization (Penton, 1985), Seventh Day Adventists have gained wider acceptance whilst maintaining sabbatarianism, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is redefining itself as a part of "mainstream" Christianity (Mormon Moment, 2000), whilst the Reorganized Latter Day Saints Church now calls itself the Community of Christ and presents itself as being closer to mainstream Protestantism, although it still holds to the Book of Mormon (Community of Christ, n.d.). But there does not appear to have been such a "total" transformation of a religious organization as is the case with the WCG. In the space of ten years, the WCG has moved from being somewhat of a pariah to being represented in the main evangelical circles as a model of Christian revival (Nichols & Mather, 1998).

Not all commentators have been as positive (Arnn, 1997; Ditzel, 1997; Hand, 2001; Sumner, 2000). They point to the autocratic way in which the WCG handled the changes, the uncertainty of the orthodoxy of positions now held, and the human cost involved. Such sceptics question the motives of WCG leaders, for “betraying” their religious constituency rather than leaving the church, and for craving respectability within Christian circles. The situation has generated personal grievances and misunderstanding, not yet entirely resolved within the WCG as clearer distinctions are being made between the old and new faith. Although the WCG has made some effort to explain the changes to the membership (Morrison, 2003), some fault the WCG leaders for failing to consult with them and also for intolerance towards those who prefer the older beliefs and practices (Lapacka, 2001). Critics such as Ditzel (1997, p.6) say they “demand true fruit rather than an image of evangelicalism” because “the possible regeneration of a leader or leaders and the publication of orthodox-sounding articles does not guarantee a spiritually healthy church.” Many of these criticisms date from the late 1990s and early 2000s and may need to be revised.

Radical change relates not just to the rejection of a church’s regulated beliefs and behaviour but also to a way of thought that is characteristic of such a religion. Yet there may be a distinction between conformity or otherwise to a religious organization and a person’s religiousness, so that changes in these two dimensions may not be highly correlated (Glasner, 1977, p.110). This is important when considering the relationship between the WCG changes and the leaders’ personal transformation. Nevertheless, it is worth noting Luckmann’s (1967, p.96) comment that “the individual does not escape the consciousness-shaping effect of institutional norms to a considerable extent.” Although the WCG leaders are credited with changing the WCG, it is not clear how they themselves were transformed by the dynamics of the change process. Whether or not the WCG leaders can account for the dynamics of the changes, they probably would agree with Berger (1971, p.108) that “The fundamental religious impulse is not to theorize about transcendence but to worship it.”

The study of the development of people within a religious organization can take into account the phenomenon of secularization, which may have psychological consequences. According to Bouma (1992, p.160):

In its historical origins secularisation referred to a process in which religion and in particular the church was seen to lose power, control and significance. In current usage secularisation has become synonymous with religious decline – decline in church attendance, decline in religious influence and decline in personal faith.

This takes into account the possibility that change in the individual may be *away* from religiousness (such as disengagement, disaffiliation or even apostasy; Bromley, 1988). Also, “Understanding conversion as a shift of belief allows conversion to take on a uniquely secular character at times” (Gillespie, 1991, p.15). Paradoxically, the WCG’s “secularization” was to (re-)enter the world by moving to the mainstream of Christianity and to conform its religious beliefs and practices to orthodoxy.

Although the present thesis deals primarily with cognitive developments, it is mindful of the various “stage” views of development that have surfaced in a number of areas. In the sociology of religion, Troeltsch (1931) and Dent (1970) suggested movement from cult to sect to church. As Berger (1967, p.164) wrote, “The sect, in its classical sociology-of-religion conception, serves as the model for organizing a cognitive minority *against* a hostile or at least non-believing milieu.” The WCG already was an isolated, troubled cognitive minority when these changes commenced. Yet the boundaries between it and the world, if not eroded, had become permeable by the time the changes were being introduced. Within secularization, there may be a shift in the locus of authority for beliefs from “institutional legitimation” to personal choice.

The WCG’s experience has been unusual. The leaders rethought the beliefs, then used the processes of institutional legitimation to impose them on the followers. Thus there is a paradox in this movement for change – traditionally, sects were “definers of the actual beliefs of members” (Marty, 1967, p.3) and this function would have been loosened in a period of boundary dissolution, as part of secularization. However, it appears that, contrary to the usual developments, during a period of liberalising reform, the WCG leaders actually reinvoked the belief- defining function of the sect. Whilst the new beliefs are more benevolent and orthodox than the original ones, the leaders appear to be intolerant of dissent (Feazell, 2001, 2003). The Christian Bible – although understood in a new light - continues to form the basis for authoritarianism, and the leaders can only offer expressions

of regret that this approach was necessary (in their estimation) for the changes to be introduced in an environment bristling with resistance (Feazell, 2001, p.45).

Reich's theories apply well to this paradoxical transformation. Reich (1993) has attempted to integrate numerous strands of theory. Referring to the sub-specializations in the field of psychology of religion, Reich proposes a scheme for a comprehensive approach to religious change, taking into account multiple perspectives and methodologies. However, it is clear that to correlate a number of strands of theory (presented as "stages" in cognitive and organizational development) to provide a comprehensive account of the WCG's transformation, would be too ambitious. Instead, Reich's consideration of trivalent logic (Reich, 2002b) is a more manageable approach, in that it takes into account cognitive processes relevant to understanding a single belief that could be central to the WCG's transformation.

The WCG's theology was drawn from a non-Trinitarian tradition. The orthodox doctrine that God is Three in One was rejected as being of pagan origin and illogical (WCG, 1966, c1970). This thesis considers the possibility that the adoption of the Trinity doctrine, if not pivotal (as suggested by Lapacka, 2001, p.274), could have been important to the WCG's transformation, and that the kind of thinking that led to adopting the Trinity doctrine facilitated both the adoption of other traditional Christian doctrines and the WCG's re-orientation of identity. The adoption of the Trinity belief was preceded by liberalization of teachings regarding medicine, cosmetics, birthdays, interracial marriage, voting, the abandonment of the expectation to become God, and the entry into a New Covenant relationship with God based on grace and, consequently, the abandonment of the seventh-day Sabbath and Israelite festivals (Feazell, 2001, pp.179-180). Of course, this seems to cover the transformation of the organization (from cult or sect to church) but it cannot account for the conversion of individual members.

Nevertheless, Reich proposes that there may be a link between a Complementary way of thinking (now called Relational and Contextual Reasoning, or RCR – the interchangeability of these terms will be explained in a later chapter) and the ability to explain or understand the logic that is required to believe in the Trinity doctrine (Reich, 1989b, 1990a, 2002b). Furthermore, once that cognitive "stage" is attained, other beliefs

of similar complexity might be understood and accepted. Reich (2002b, pp 12-13) defines RCR as:

a specific thought form which implies that two or more heterogeneous descriptions, explanations, models, theories or interpretations of the very same entity, phenomenon, or functionally coherent whole are both “logically” possible and acceptable together under certain conditions, and can be coordinated accordingly.

However, the Trinity doctrine (involving relational complexity) is not directly connected to other complex beliefs, except to a fundamental ground of the doctrine itself. That is the matter of the nature (more correctly “two natures”) of Christ. Historically, that belief was established as being necessary for a coherent doctrine of the Trinity. The orthodox Christian position is that the mark of true identification as a Christian is to be linked to God through Christ as both God and Man, this made complete by the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Thus the Christian’s identity is construed as a relational one, brought into being by a relational God (Grenz, 2004; Olson & Hall, 2002; Zimmerman, 2004). The extensive coverage of religious material in this thesis is necessary to illustrate, and to provide background materials for, the application of Reich’s theory of relational and contextual reasoning (RCR).

It seems that once a person identifies with the Trinity doctrine, becoming a Christian (at least being more Christ-centred) is an identity-shift that requires adoption of beliefs held by other Christians, and rejection of beliefs that are derived from a deficient Christology. The personhood of Christ as God has always been accepted by the WCG, so why would the WCG *now* accept the personhood of the Holy Spirit? A functional reason would be to “complete” the triadic logic, but this is not fundamentally necessary, as argued by Binitarian believers (those who believe that the Godhead consists of only two persons) and acknowledged by recent conservative scholarship (Letham, 2004, p.52). The traditional WCG position was that God consisted of Father and Son as personal identities, but the Holy Spirit was a force or spiritual essence. Furthermore, the WCG position was that the God beings were one but also distinct, although not two Gods (Armstrong, 1978, 1985). In the past, the WCG did not progress beyond this understanding. As pointed out by Beverley (1985, p.57) before the changes:

A proper WCG Christology will never be reached as long as its analysis adheres to certain doctrinal lines without concern for a broad, penetrating grasp of the whole life and spirit of the God-Man behind the Gospel accounts. Unfortunately, WCG literature neither captures the warmth and vitality of the unique Christ nor his fire and passion in radical obedience to God.

Evidently the WCG has progressed from this incomplete understanding of God and has come into a “consciousness” of the Third Person’s relationship to the Godhead, in its movement towards Christian spirituality (as anticipated by Letham, 2004, p.55).

For the old WCG, the potential of human beings was to “become God” (Armstrong, 1978), thus extending the oneness of the Godhead, although the Father would remain supreme, and the Son equal but subordinate. Believers were to share in the essence and qualities of the Godhead, yet remain subordinate to the Father and Son. This “open” Godhead was the hope and desire of all WCG adherents, but was inexplicably removed not long before the WCG considered the Trinity doctrine. There must have been a compelling reason for the WCG’s leadership to make such a radical change, for it resulted in considerable cognitive dissonance, distress and apostasy (Alnor, 1991; Arnn, 1997; Branch, 2000; LeBlanc, 1994; Thiel & Thiel, n.d.). For this study, the focus lies in cognitive processes – what kind of thinking made it possible for WCG leaders to believe in the Trinity, and how this may have contributed to other changes.

Earlier attempts to liberalize the WCG’s approach, in the 1970s, ended with a regression to fundamentalism and an inquisition against dissidents (Armstrong, 1981b). Whilst Herbert Armstrong’s attentions were diverted to international travel and a second marriage, Armstrong’s son and a group of “intellectuals” – prominent among whom was Dr. Robert Kuhn, who trained as a neuro-psychologist – produced a *Systematic Theology Project* (WCG, 1978) in an attempt to clarify the substance and shape of WCG doctrine. Armstrong later denied that he authorized this project and denounced it as a liberal “plot” to overthrow him. He excommunicated his son and many of the reformers, and reasserted his autocratic control of the WCG. Armstrong loyalists (amongst whom were the Tkachs, father and son, and the current deputy, J. Michael Feazell) tightened their grip on WCG ministers and members (Armstrong, 1981b),

resulting in numerous defections and expulsions. Indeed, it has been suggested that the senior Tkach was rewarded for his loyalty by being appointed as Armstrong's successor (Renehan, 1995). Before his own death in 1999, long time WCG observer John Trechak, in his *Ambassador Report*, raised issues about Tkach's background and character (Trechak, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1990a, 1990b, 1991, 1992) that are difficult to reconcile with his official image. See also Dankenbring and Keyser (n.d.), Nickels (1996, p.219), and Heap (1995) for information that, if true, would discredit Tkach as a Christian minister. This is mentioned as a factor when considering Tkach's qualifications for introducing the reforms, and not to discredit him personally. The paradox of personal dysfunction in Christian leadership is dealt with in McIntosh & Rima (1997) and Narromine (1988).

There followed a period of consolidation of power, and the senior Tkach assumed the personality of a charismatic patron to maintain the WCG's continued existence (Bacchiocchi, 1996). With Armstrong's death – and discrediting after the revelation of his theological incompetence, self-enrichment, and alleged sexual misconduct (Robinson, 1980) – came a period of uncertainty and disillusionment in an ageing WCG constituency ("MAM", n.d.; Tkach, 1997). WCG adherents probably were ripe for remission from this bondage, but there were no authorized channels for addressing theological or pastoral difficulties except by the initiative of the sect's leadership. Tkach Jr's (1997) and Fezell's (2001) accounts of the leadership transition and subsequent developments put a positive gloss on Armstrong and the late Tkach Sr's role in these events. Their accounts of the transition and transformation have been praised by some mainstream religious communicators (Hanegraaf, 2000), although received with scepticism by others (Sumner, 2000) and Tkach's role has been thoroughly condemned by numerous former WCG clergy and members (Stuhlman, n.d.). Larry Salyer, former chairman of the WCG's doctrinal committee, reconstituted following Armstrong's death (Barnett, 1997), claims that the WCG again sought to document the church's beliefs after the fashion of the defunct *Systematic Theology Project* (STP). In 1988, Salyer was succeeded by Fezell who, Salyer alleges (Barnett, 1997, p5), pressured the committee to accelerate its revisions of doctrine. For example:

It was stated that our previous statements about God as a family had been misplaced and were false I [Salyer] stormed into Mr. Tkach's office and

said we can't do this, we are destroying a fundamental doctrine of the church. He informed me that he had already received five memos to that effect from people who had read the preliminary paper, all members of the doctrinal team.

The above is a little of the context of the WCG's departure from its former character and identity, and many have been ready to argue that the change has been all to the good (Benson, n.d.; Borchers, 1997). In the present thesis, the character of the leading individuals or the authenticity of the sect's teachings is not the primary concern. In the Christian context, especially within a holiness tradition, conversion is a major factor in evaluating the identity and worth of an individual's Christian status and reputation. In this instance, we are faced with the conversion of a sect's leaders. In Troeltschian terms, this would relate to development involving various stages. The attempt to correlate various stage models from various disciplines to give a comprehensive account of this transformation would be formidable, even though Reich's project entails promise of this. Helminiak (1987, pp.72-73) offers a comparison of stages of human development proposed by Erikson, Fowler, Kohlberg, Piaget, Loevinger, and others. The relationship of Reich's theory to other developmental stage theories will be considered in Chapter 2.

The WCG, like the Restorationist movement (Clark, 1949; Butterwell, n.d.; Briney, 1904), sought to rediscover the original New Testament beliefs and practices, to divest itself of "non Christian" accretions, and not rely on historic Christian creeds as the basis for its faith (personal discussion with Richard F. Plache, former senior WCG pastor, 1984). Armstrong's claim for extra-biblical revelation will have compromised this. During the 1970s' "liberal" push, there was a limited and cautious attempt to accommodate some of historic Christianity ("MAM", n.d.), but the 1980s conservative backlash led to a restoration of Armstrong's peculiar revelations (Armstrong, 1981b). The more recent reformation was not without its own paradoxes. The repudiation of Armstrong's flawed theological framework might have led to the questioning of the WCG's legitimacy as a Christian church. That has always been the position of extreme cult-watchers, who judged the WCG as being heretical and anti-Christian (Sumner, 1974, 2000; McGregor, 1997). However, the reformation of a sect and its adoption of an orthodox identity must be taken seriously. Chapter 6 will present evidence that there is a

connection between the adoption of new beliefs by the WCG leaders and new ways of thinking, thus confirming aspects of conversion theory.

The WCG's transformation has also involved a partial rehabilitation of Armstrong. It has been suggested that Armstrong's early writings were consistent with true Christianity but that Armstrong's lack of theological training led to distortions (Feazell, 2003), further compounded by enthusiastic followers. The current leadership suggests that Armstrong came to realize his errors immediately before his death and gave a mandate to his successor to initiate changes (Tkach, 1991a, p.4). This suggestion has served as a way of demonstrating continuity of Christian identity for the WCG, past and present. It also serves as a powerful affirmation, to the WCG itself, of its legitimacy as a Christian church and the validity of conversion of those who became adherents during its non-orthodox phase. Whilst on the one hand there is a radical break with "Armstrongism," on the other hand the leaders retained their Armstrong-appointed power base to make the changes. In their estimation, they and the membership were deemed to be Christians all along. Thus the transformation of the WCG is not portrayed as a wholesale conversion, *ab initio*, but as the sect's enlightenment, liberalisation, and emancipation from legalism (Feazell, 2001). Although this has been hailed enthusiastically by many observers, it has troubled the minds of others who expected the WCG to entirely repudiate its "heretical" past and to seek conversion "from scratch," and to make restitution for alleged past wrongs (Ancona, 1990). Furthermore, there continue to be concerns raised about the WCG's continuation of its earlier behaviour, which would imply that "transformation" is not necessarily wholesale "conversion." Many have been conflicted by this paradox.

The WCG people were converted to Armstrongism in the past, but were they later converted to a new faith altogether and was the old truly repudiated? There are numerous web-site sources moderated by former WCG adherents (these are in flux and the reader is advised to check current sites on Google - no endorsement of any of the material found on such sites is expressed or implied) where several charges are made out against the WCG. The following synopsis of allegations cannot be verified in this thesis, only reported. These sources charge the WCG leaders with:

- Failure to deal with the past, including insufficient acknowledgment of the WCG's past cultic/heretical status and alleged abuses of members, and the apparent exoneration of Herbert Armstrong;
- Failure to deal with the present, including insufficient pastoral care for those who cannot accept the changes, and alleged continuation of authoritarian governance;
- Failure to deal with the future, including uncertain provision for employee retirement and the aged, and rumours of losing identity as a denomination.

The existence of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1956) in some observers of the WCG's change cannot be dismissed, as their interpretations are painfully grounded in their past experiences with what they, in retrospect, consider to be a cult, and this gives rise to a persistent hermeneutic of suspicion. Some former WCG executives (Kuhn & Geis, 1984) have provided a veiled analysis of the WCG's past organizational dysfunctions, and refer to religious "settings where collective mission subjugates individual meaning, where party fidelity swamps private desire, where sect purpose crushes personal freedom" (p.12). According to a sociologist of religion (Enroth, 1979), self-deception is a feature of cults. "The deceit of the promoters is not always conscious; it is often the result of a sincere desire to do good and intense commitment to a cause" (p.14). That Tkach Jr. [JT] is aware of the dangers of self-deception is shown by his answer to a question by "Brother Watch" [BW] (Borchers, 1999, p.4):

BW: Cognitive dissonance is a hallmark of the cults. What is this "delusion" called cognitive dissonance? How does it compare to George Orwell's *doublethink*?

JT: The social scientist, Leo {sic} Festinger, coined the term *cognitive dissonance* to describe the unwitting practice of a person to believe two inherently contradictory ideas as both being true. (It is different from a paradox, in which two ideas *appear* to be contradictory but are in fact both true, such as the paradox of light being both a particle and a wave.) As I recall, Orwell pointed out that this occurs because we do not always think matters through to their logical conclusions and Orwell's doublethink compares favourably to Dr. Festinger's work on the topic.

Linking cognitive dissonance and abuse, Ward (2002, p.5) says:

By opposing WCG traditions, WCG leaders have caused much needless alienation and attrition in membership. WCG's policies have also partly sabotaged its doctrinal reforms. People in WCG would have been more receptive to new teaching if the teaching hadn't come from people who so obviously viewed them with arrogance and contempt and were basically trying to destroy their culture.

This first area of cognitive dissonance is partly a byproduct of a second, larger one. Mike Fezell states early in his book [*The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God*, 2001] that one of the major problems in the old WCG, along with exclusivism and legalism, was authoritarianism. Then later in the book, he finds ways to rationalize the fact that the new WCG still has an authoritarian approach. It's hard to let go of absolute power, but WCG's reforms will never be complete until some accountability is introduced into the organization.

Studies of abusive sects or churches (such as Enroth, 1992; 1994; and Blue, 1993) reveal that cognitive conflict can be engendered in sect members, for example, by placing members in a "double bind," where resistance to sect leaders is equated with rebellion against God (Enroth, 1992, p.79). Ironically, "spiritually abusive churches usually are closer to biblical orthodoxy than they are to outright heresy" (p.200). This shows that the acceptability of beliefs to mainstream Christianity is no guarantee that the church experience will be positive, especially if there is an authoritarian streak in the leaders. Evidently those who left the WCG lost trust in their leaders. As the WCG continues to be led by those who were in power during the pre-transformation period, these "Leaders may sincerely not recognize that their leadership style and policies are experienced by many members as a spiritual elitism and an authoritarianism that borders on 'speaking for God'" (Enroth, 1994, p.153). Ironically, a former WCG member, Dr. Mike Linacre (1993), gave a clear synopsis of this situation (probably with conscious reference to the WCG at that time) whilst he was a minister of a WCG offshoot.

Present WCG leaders are candid in their admission of some past error and moral failings of the church's founder, and have shown insight into their predicament, together

with attempts to pursue authentic spiritual disciplines. However, they do not appear to have placed heavy emphasis on their acceptance of collective responsibility for the disastrous effect the sect had on its members' lives, many of whom are now outside the pale of historic Christianity. There have been, however, attempts to deal with broken relationships within the church, especially in regard to inter-racial tensions (Eddy, May & Earle, 2004). The irony, often admitted by the new WCG leaders, is that whilst it is now admitted that the WCG was a dysfunctional "cult," it nevertheless had a legitimate existence and its foundational principles and experiences should not be repudiated (Nichols & Mather, 1998). The suggestion is that if Armstrong had known better, he certainly would have instigated the current reforms himself much earlier (Tkach, 1991a) but this evades the WCG's fundamental problem: either it was a marginal Christian sect that needed "reform" in some areas, or it was thoroughly in error theologically, and allegedly corrupt organizationally and a serious abuser of its membership, requiring total transformation. The present thesis cannot resolve that paradox for the WCG leaders, but an attempt will be made to explore their reasoning in the context of their struggle for change.

A recent video film of the WCG's transformation, *Called to be Free* (Johnson & Kramer, 2004) provides selective, although sincere and compelling, accounts of the changes. The film is an apologetic tool aimed at members of the Mormon Church, to illustrate how changes have given hope to members of another sect (the WCG), and is very positive about the WCG's transformation. All WCG churches have been issued with this film and it may be a powerful instrument in reinforcing the WCG members' new identity. In *Called To Be Free*, WCG leaders such as Joseph Tkach Junior, Gregory Albrecht, Michael Feazell, and a few others, retell that they revisited some of Armstrong's teachings not long after he died, and found some unconvincing or "bizarre." Albrecht stated: "After that I was willing to consider cognitively that Mr Armstrong could be wrong on other things." Thus the changes were to a large extent founded on doubts about the existing beliefs, rather than attraction to orthodox Christian teachings. This negative approach uncovered, according to Tkach Jr., "serious flaws in Armstrongism" and led to "critical" studies of WCG beliefs. Many of these beliefs were superficial, such as the prohibition on women wearing cosmetics, others more serious, such as the discouragement of using medicine, and others esoteric, such as the belief that white Americans were Israelites. By the time the doctrine of God was reviewed,

Armstrong's teachings were already discredited, at least in the eyes of the WCG leaders. A piece-meal approach to doctrinal revision was eventually superseded by a realization that the entire structure, or paradigm, of WCG teachings could no longer be sustained.

The announcement by Tkach Sr that the WCG was a now a "new covenant" church led to mass defections, but in the lives of those responsible for the changes there are testimonies (all are on the video) such as –

"When grace came, it was like awakening out of a coma" (Joseph Tkach Jr., president)

"The scales were removed from my eyes ... a veil was lifted ... the Holy Spirit was opening minds" (Ronald Kelly, treasurer)

"We went from error and blindness to spiritual sight" (Bernie Schnippert, public relations)

"The light went on" (Monte Wolverton, artist)

"I realized that the whole belief system was in error. It couldn't be repaired. It had to be pulled down" (Dan Rogers, superintendent of ministers)

Regarding why so many of the WCG ministers and members rejected these changes, Schnippert says *"you either see it or you don't."* In a sense, this is a perceptual phenomenon, akin to Reich's description of how context determines explanations for optical illusions. The WCG leaders' metaphors for illumination are telling: for them, beliefs were seen differently. Even the source of their authority, the Bible, was read with new discoveries and insight. The members who followed the leaders down this path apparently have entered into the same conversion experiences. Indeed, the consciousness of a revival in their religious experience, for some (such as Benson, n.d.), makes it libellous to be referred to as a "former cult" as the revival to them is proof that the WCG's (and its members') conversion was valid all along. This view, validating the Armstrong period as Christian, was held by all current WCG members encountered during this research, although this position was met with scepticism in confidential talks with Anglican and Baptist clergy. Here there is a fine tension between sameness and difference, the old co-existing with the new.

It is difficult to refute the WCG's claim that it is a transformed religion. The evidence of new (and theologically more mainstream) knowledge is there, and the lives of the members seem to be awakened with new enthusiasm for their faith. In William James' assessment, this change in an aberrational sect has to be significant in terms of its psychological processes and not just defined metaphysically. The sect can attribute its change to supernatural causes, but that is not a matter this thesis can deal with. Our task is limited to identifying any cognitive structural changes in thinking (such as changes in method of argument) that might have led to different religious content in thinking. The old, exclusive WCG (despite its belief in an open "family of God") had to become inclusive, ironically, on the basis of a closed (although relational) Godhead. The WCG was not what it thought it was, and this could not be resolved until its way of thinking was changed.

1.4 The matter of conversion

In this introduction, before the details of WCG thinking are explored, it is worth considering some of the elements of conversion. Although many studies deal with mass movements, group and institutional experiences, the focus of this thesis is on individuals, particularly the WCG leaders. Little is known, apart from hearsay, of the general WCG membership and it is not intended to regard the leaders as representative of them in a statistical way. However, the leaders' claim that the WCG has been "transformed" invites consideration of their own "transformation."

Percy (2000, p.xii) outlines some of Rambo's dimensions of conversion (see also Rambo, 1993). The first, *Tradition*, applies to the WCG in the sense that Armstrong had an early association with the Church of God (Seventh Day), many of whose teachings were imported into the "Radio Church of God" (as the WCG was then known). One of these teachings was that of the "true church." Armstrong appropriated this, to give his own work legitimacy, with the notion that he was the end-time prophet, with a special mission. Interestingly, the basis for this historic link with early Christianity, and Armstrong's special mission (Dugger & Dodd, 1972), has been discredited by the WCG's current leaders and the Church of God (Seventh Day). Armstrong's conversion is recounted in his Autobiography (Armstrong, 1986, p.312). He writes "Jesus Christ had bought and paid for my life by His death. It really belonged

to Him, and now I told Him, he could have it!” Yet his strong sense of uniqueness, and independence from regular churches, formed the basis upon which his theological framework was built. For over half a century, Armstrong’s sect became increasingly centred on his will and mission, many say to the detriment of the WCG’s development as a Christian church.

Rambo’s second element, *Transformation*, could well be at the non-spiritual level, for it involves personal cognitive and behavioural changes, and shifts in self-consciousness, based on cognitive capability established in childhood (Piaget, 1972; Kohlberg, 1981) and the person’s conversion later resulting from movement through the stages of knowing or thinking as described by Erikson (1965, 1980) and Fowler (1981, 2000). It could be entirely a human development, without spiritual engagement, although the matter of what is termed “double-causality” is relevant. Armstrong (1978, p.128) himself raised the possibility of “false conversion,” which he applied to the members of other churches despite the sincerity of their convictions. What Armstrong also meant by “false conversion” is a self-centred appropriation of divine calling, with only superficial changes in character although masked by religiosity and sincerity. For Armstrong, “true” conversion was evidenced by a person’s commitment (demonstrated by generous giving) to *his* mission (Armstrong, c.1970). Ironically, due to revelations of Armstrong’s theological errors and moral failings, some have applied the “false conversion” label to Armstrong and his followers, if not to the current reformed WCG notwithstanding its apparent acceptance within mainstream evangelicalism.

The third element, *Transcendence*, involves an encounter with the sacred. The WCG indeed attributes its transformation to spiritual causes, and seeks also to transcend the deficient aspects of its past. It is unquestioned by mainstream Christianity that “the gift of the Spirit is an integral part of becoming a Christian” (Smith, 2001, p.197) but this dimension is beyond empirical measurement unless the “fruits” of that conversion can (or should) be quantified. The WCG claims this charismatic endowment from its inception and, if this is true, then the WCG members have always been converted (not only to “Armstrongism” but also, at the same time, to “true Christianity”) – perhaps rendering the recent changes unnecessary and enigmatic.

The relevance of cognitive and faith stage approaches in conversion (Fowler, 1981) has been considered by WCG leaders, in the form of Fowler's taxonomy (Living Today Media, 2001, p.6; see also Fowler, 1981; Oser & Gmünder, 1991.) Fowler's stages, as summarized by the preceding sources, are:

- (1) *Intuitive-projective faith* – In early childhood, impressions are formed about protective and threatening powers that affect one's life.
- (2) *Mythic-literal faith* – In later childhood, as logical thinking develops, reality is ordered according to cause and effect.
- (3) *Synthetic-conventional faith* – From adolescence, there is integration of ideas and images, to provide a coherent identity, although this may be socially conformist.
- (4) *Individuating-reflective faith* – Young adulthood brings critical reflection on one's beliefs and values, but opens up areas of self-responsibility and relationship commitment.
- (5) *Paradoxical-consolidated faith* – From "middle age," one realizes that polarities need to be reconciled, and paradoxes accepted, and the symbolic nature of beliefs are again appreciated.
- (6) *Universalizing faith* – Later in life there is a sense of unity with others and the transcendent, as a feature of one's own integration. This liberates the person for self-less engagement with the world and humility in the face of the unknown.

The WCG's summary of these stages (Living Today Media, 2001), is not clearly signposted as either descriptive or normative for the WCG situation. That is, the stages have not been systematically integrated or compared with the WCG's own experience (at least in documents readily available). There has been no study of the WCG that deals with these dimensions. After dismissing the foundational age-related stages, there can only be speculation as to the WCG leaders' corresponding "stage." If Fowler's and Reich's categories are loosely correlated, it may be that the cognitive development of those with fundamentalist beliefs is retarded by elements of mythic-literal faith [Fowler's Stage 2],

which to some extent was characteristic of those in the old WCG - according to Feazell (2001, p.36) "Armstrong's church shared many characteristics of American fundamentalism," particularly a literal interpretation of some Scriptures and a juvenile understanding of God. The WCG's transformation initially consisted of leaders who came to recognize their progression along the lines of Fowler's stages, but how this relates to the development of relational and contextual reasoning (RCR) and the WCG's transformation in psychological terms is unclear. A change in the "way of thinking" has been selected, as a change in the content of belief is not sufficient to account for cognitive conversion. The WCG now espouses new beliefs but it is germane to this thesis that a changed way of thinking is a better sign of conversion than the simple reiteration of a new belief.

What, then, was the "way of thinking" that was characteristic of the WCG from its inception to the incipient reforms of Armstrong's successors? Apart from being socially reactionary, and biblically literalist, the WCG was heavily influenced by the notion of revelation, in this case primarily through the medium of Herbert Armstrong. Members everywhere were encouraged to absorb and anticipate Armstrong's views on all matters (as passed on by "headquarters" in Pasadena and the ministry). As "Christ's apostle," self-promoted to being third in the divine hierarchy after the Father and Son, he claimed to have "the mind of Christ" and opposition to Armstrong's dictates meant loss of salvation ("Lindsey", 2003). "Reasoning" (that is, coming to conclusions by means of argument and evidence) was seen as a denial of revelation or, at least, a threat to the WCG's power structure, which imposed argument from authority, typical of Fowler's earliest stage. Convergence of thought was encouraged in the interest of harmony and control. Post-Armstrong critics have often drawn on studies of cultic manipulation to explain the alleged immaturity and oppression of former WCG members (Dewey, 2004). The long-term effect on those who remained in the WCG is difficult to assess. To judge how the leaders reasoned or thought in the old regime is best done by referring to the WCG's literature, and to hear their post-facto explanations.

The transition from the old to the new way of thinking about doctrine and church governance is interesting given that the authority of the old was used to implement the new. That is, the freedom to believe the new doctrines was imposed from above, as there was no grass roots demand for them. There are many reports of harsh dealings with ministers or members who could not accept, in good conscience, the new beliefs

(Dewey, 2004). Many considered the new beliefs to be of Satanic origin, and clung to the older doctrine believing that it was God-inspired through Herbert Armstrong. At a broad level, the old form of reasoning was literalistic, dogmatic and intolerant of ambiguity. To some extent it appears that the new beliefs were entertained by the leaders with such a mindset largely intact. This phenomenon, in the religious context, is closely related to the experience of conversion. It is to these considerations that we now turn, to consider the changes in thinking that are intrinsic to religious transformation. The WCG's changes require close scrutiny: If the way of thinking has changed only superficially, have the WCG leaders really had a true change of mind?

1.5 Longenecker's types of change

It is now necessary to consider the cognitive dimensions of conversion, towards understanding the WCG's transformation. The term "conversion" has been used as a judgment of the authenticity of a person's standing as a church member. Longenecker (1997, p.xiii) refers to several types of change in religious experience:

- *Conversion* – "a radical change of thought , outlook, commitments, and practice, which involves either an overt or a subconscious break with one's past identity."
- *Transformation* – "a new perception and a marked change in form or appearance, but not necessarily a break with the past."
- *Alternation* – "a shift in perspective and practice, but without any distancing from one's past."

The WCG claims a "transformation" although it is apparent that it has experienced several of the above characteristics of change. A distinction must be made between an organization's change and the experiences of individuals within that organization. On the surface, there is no doubt that the WCG – as an organization – has undergone profound and extensive changes in its doctrine and polity (see videos by Johnson & Kramer, 2004; Tay, 2003). According to the above definitions, however, the WCG has not undergone a complete conversion, and it is possible that some members will have been swept along with the organization's changes although, personally, those members will have retained their previous ways of thinking and thus are superficially

converted. It is possible to use the term “transformation,” as the WCG has not made a complete break with its past, but inconsistencies mean it may be more accurate to describe this change as “alternation” in some cases. Since most WCG adherents maintain they were already converted Christians before the Tkach reforms, to suggest otherwise may cause discomfort. Some members have come to doubt their conversion to Christianity under the Armstrong tutelage and have joined other churches.

A change in the beliefs of an organization does not mean a change in the cognitive processing of an organization, unless this is an expression of a collection of individuals with uniform ideas and ways of thinking. Therefore the claim, that an organization is converted, is really a figure of speech. Nevertheless, the “conversion” of an organization’s leaders and adherents could lead to changes in the shape or functioning of an organization. That is, the terms “transformation” and “alternation” may have collective uses but conversion is an individual phenomenon. Of course, a collection of individuals might be called “converted” if each individual were truly changed. The new WCG in many ways is different from that under the Armstrong regime, but this may be the result only of the “leopard changing its spots,” according to one ex-member (Ancona, 1990). To some, these issues cast a cloud of unknowing over the WCG’s transformation. To be fair, some of the WCG’s most strident critics have retained a negative mind-set regardless of any positive changes in the church.

Reich’s RCR theory, as a way of resolving paradox, is explained in the next chapter. The intention is to identify levels of thought in old and new WCG belief contexts. The old, earlier statements of WCG leaders are expected to be at a low level of RCR, in that the older way of thinking lacked awareness of paradox or dissonance in the beliefs or believers, or the mind-set at that time was incapable of, or resistant to, such awareness. An elevation of reasoning in RCR terms is expected of the new WCG leaders, to justify their standing as being “converted,” that is, of a qualitatively different mind. That a shift in perspective has taken place is true, but confirmation of the depth of that in the change in thinking is needed. This thesis is an exploration of these changes without being judgmental, and the following survey of theories of cognitive conversion is intended to illuminate the connection between reasoning and religious change.

“Alternation” would be a low level of change and if this is all the WCG experienced, then it could be said that the conversion experience was superficial. “Transformation” would be a more desirable level of change, even though this may not adequately resolve issues from the WCG’s cultic past. The links between the old and new provide further areas of paradox and inconsistency. Conversion, it will be shown, is not simply a matter of thinking about different things, but is a change in the way of thinking or reasoning, having deep impact on the individual’s core identity and resulting in radical changes in an individual’s “religious deep-structures” (Oser & Gmünder, 1991, p.33). A change to RCR thinking involves the overcoming of obstacles such as apparent contradiction, illogic or paradox, and may present a solution to cognitive dissonance, which WCG leaders have mentioned as being present throughout their procession from old to new beliefs.

Percy (2000, p.xi) refers to conversion as a “re-turning” and the WCG experience does indeed involve several twists and turns. Like the Restorationist movement in the 19th century American religious landscape, Armstrong claimed to have re-discovered the original New Testament church teachings. Indeed some of Armstrong’s early teachings were innocuous and simply written in a popular journalistic style. As the WCG developed into a more self-contained and theologically-isolated organization, its beliefs and practices became increasingly aberrational and onerous, leading to some dissent in the mid to late 1970s. During Garner Ted Armstrong’s administration, many “liberal” ministers attempted to “Christianize” the WCG. The conservative backlash of the 1980s only succeeded in turning the WCG back to the intense restrictions of the 1960s, for a while, until “cognitive dissonance” troubled Armstrong’s successors. Following Armstrong’s death, these ministers could not reconcile the pre-Christian WCG with sounder Biblical teachings to which they were exposed during their higher degree studies at institutions such as Azusa Pacific University (Albrecht, 2004; Feazell, 2001; Tkach, 1997).

During the transforming events of the 1990s, there appear to have been two (somewhat incompatible) restorations. Most prominently, a more historically accurate view of the early Christian church was accepted, thus aligning the WCG at last with historic Christianity. The effect of this was to undermine the WCG’s claim to an exclusive apostolic descent. This shaking of the WCG’s foundations could have

delegitimized its claim to have been a Christian church, and exposed Armstrong's teaching as "heresy." However, that could have destroyed the continuity of the WCG as an institution. The quasi-rehabilitation of Herbert Armstrong was the other dimension of the WCG's transformation. It was suggested that Armstrong's early religious experience and writings were indeed consistent with genuine Christianity but, due to misguided enthusiasm and lack of formal education, Armstrong strayed into error and these errors were subsequently embellished by his ardent followers. It is hinted that Armstrong came to realize this immediately prior to his death and gave a mandate to his successor to introduce changes that Armstrong wished he could effect personally if he survived. Armstrong's final book, *Mystery of the Ages* (Armstrong, 1985), an edited compilation of his teaching, was withdrawn soon after this death. The new WCG regime needed the legitimacy of Armstrong to carry on, whilst repudiating most of his teaching.

This may be a key factor in the WCG's transformation: the paradox of needing a heretical (but not necessarily unchristian) church's authority to introduce a new church, from within. This is further complicated by the WCG's alleged use of repressive measures in implementing the reforms. Questions can be raised about WCG leaders, concerning their intrinsic quest for change, and any feelings of guilt following awareness of doctrinal error, organizational corruption and personal failings. The same concerns can be raised about those WCG members who remained in the organization. Were they truly "converted" to these changes or have they simply adjusted to change?

An unresolved issue in this process is the underlying assumption of a special "calling by God." Armstrong interpreted this as applying to support for his mission, and opposed the members reinterpreting this to apply to their direct election by God. Armstrong's death could have been interpreted as being the end of that mission, and members needed to have a reason to continue in the church that was (according to Armstrong) specifically built to carry out that mission under his personal leadership. The new WCG has had to deal with this issue by reinterpreting the content of that mission, now expressed in mainstream Christian terms. The specific problem for the WCG is to justify its existence as a Christian church without entirely repudiating its past. If it were to do that, then that would be an admission that it never was a Christian church and that its members (especially the leaders) were never converted to

Christianity but were deluded by a “false conversion.” Clearly, this would be untenable now given the WCG’s new identity.

Rambo (1993, p.59) draws attention to the difference between active and passive involvement in conversion processes, which often requires a complete break with the past (pp.168-169), and outlines a number of stages through which those being converted might pass. Before considering these, it is necessary to remember that Rambo incorporates transformation as part of conversion, whereas Longenecker (1997) distinguishes transformation from complete conversion and quasi-conversion (that is, alternation). Rambo’s “stages” are:

- *Context.* Rambo (1993, p.59) admits that “people are shaped by the socialization processes of the wider world.” Thus the WCG member in the late 20th century would no longer be affected by the intense social and religious environment of the earlier WCG days, and the new WCG leaders would have been more exposed to alternative views.
- *Crisis.* The WCG had gone from crisis to crisis but the death of its founder, and 10 years after this of his successor, provided a strong reason to reassess the church. Members might have weakened in their commitment to the WCG, leading to a substantial decline in income to carry out its traditional mission.
- *Quest.* Members and leaders would be looking for a solution to their situation. The experience of Armstrongism may have been unfulfilling, especially to converts since the 1980s and the younger generation. The uncertainties of a post-modern culture could have led to a felt need for more suitable types of worship and faith.
- *Encounter.* There is no reason to believe that any external body or persons actively sought to “convert” the WCG to Christian orthodoxy, but several key WCG leaders did undertake graduate studies at Azusa Pacific University and elsewhere (Tkach, 1997; Fezell, 2001). Such encounters, and the specialized readings involved, may have been influential. There was also exposure to the favoured literature of mainstream, evangelical Christianity.

- *Interaction.* The mixing of members with the “world” in which they lived, and the dialogues that commenced between WCG leaders and several “anti-cult” ministry leaders, could have created an openness of mind amongst WCG leaders to allow them to do a reappraisal of their entire belief system. Otherwise it could simply have provided them with an alternative belief set that they could seize upon, equally dogmatically.
- *Commitment.* Having decided their course of action, the WCG leaders will have needed to inform and persuade the membership at large, through announcements, discussion and re-education. New frames of reference will have been developed to allow for “new truth” to be accepted.
- *Consequences.* Overall, the outcome of enforced change was disastrous. About half the ministers and members defected, income sharply decreased leading to the termination of many ministry activities and the selling of major assets (Scott, 2004a, 2004b). For those who remained, the meaning of their experience had to be reinterpreted.

1.6 Savage’s dimensions of conversion

Savage (2000, p.2) notes that “the psychology of conversion reveals very little about the workings of God in the human soul.” Such a matter is entirely outside the province of this thesis. Following William James, the phenomenon of conversion can be studied without necessary recourse to Divine Intervention. Therefore, the transformed WCG must be studied as a case of psychological development, without ignoring motivational questions. Savage presents a number of polar dimensions, including such factors as speed, life-stages, critical incidences, personal agency, mental health, source of change, and self-orientation, which could be applied to the WCG.

(1) *Speed:* was the conversion sudden or gradual? (Savage, 2000, p.3)

The WCG’s main transformation reportedly took place within a relatively short period of time (from 1991-1996). That would raise questions about the urgency or necessity of such change. Was there, in fact, a build-up of tension, or doubt, or other factors that led to a paradigm shift? Was there a drift towards change, due to a multiplicity of reasons, which resulted in a “sudden rush”? Was there an evaporation of “conscious

commitment” to the old WCG, which made it possible for members to accept changes when they were announced? Could this be an abdication on the part of the members, crediting the church with knowledge of what it is doing, and passively going along with it?

Most WCG members tenaciously held to Armstrongism until Armstrong’s successor, Joseph W. Tkach, shocked the membership by announcing the repudiation of the existing “old covenant” paradigm. From the mid 1990s, however, gradual moves for change were evident but later the impression given was of the collapse of a house built on sand, with most of the WCG’s distinctive beliefs being abandoned.

Had the “time for change” simply arrived? Caught up in a “social process,” had individuals “gradually ‘drifted’ into conversion, almost imperceptibly, even inadvertently, through the influence of social relationships?” (Savage, 2000, p.4). Could the WCG just have arrived at a change situation almost by chance, due to the weakening of commitments to the traditional WCG by a broader range of converts in recent decades, which also had more ties with outside people and also more sources of information? Had the clergy become open to mainstream theological writings? The leaders admit being surprised by the suddenness of the developments.

Differential rates of adoption need to be accounted for. In diffusion theory (Rogers, 1983) change involves early, mid and late adopters (as well as rejectors). There are change agents and opinion leaders. How can the WCG’s rate of change be explained? Organizationally, it probably moved more quickly than the individual members. Perhaps the organization changed suddenly, whereas the average member was much slower to change (in fact, a very large proportion became disaffected and left). It would be interesting to know how the changes impacted those who had joined the WCG immediately prior to the changes, as they would be required to revert to their initial beliefs (if they had departed from historic Christianity to join the WCG).

(2) *Life-Stage*: was the conversion in adolescence or mid-life? (Savage, 2000, p.5)

Was the WCG undergoing “late life crisis?” Savage (2000, p.6) refers to Erikson’s final stage of development - where adults deal with a “crisis of integrity (wholeness, synthesis, spiritual values) versus a crisis of despair (in the face of the finitude of life.)”

Also, Savage refers to Conn's "lifelong developmental approach" to conversion. Thus "Later religious awakening is not as often experienced as a 'radical conversion', but rather comprises an intensification of nominally held beliefs" (p.6). This needs to be considered alongside the "ageing" of the WCG population. It may be that the WCG leaders had "psychologically" come of age, after years of being kept in "infancy" under a repressive regime. Or it may be that the younger generation, now in charge of the church, had the capacity and motivation to accept new and different ideas.

One aspect that could be explored is the general age group that responded positively to WCG change. Was it the older, more (spiritually) mature individuals, who recognized the need to change organizationally, as well as within themselves? Or was it the "young turks," impatient for change? That includes those who became members in the 1980s, and the new breed of ministers. Anecdotal comments by members (during personal discussions at WCG worship meetings) in 2000 were interesting: it was suggested by some that "newer" members have retained the older WCG teachings more steadfastly than the older members, and some of the converts from the 1980s were slower to respond to the WCG's agenda of change, or were wavering between the old and new. Some of the long-time members were hoping for a more complete transformation. It is not clear how many of the children of members, once attaining maturity, have remained in the WCG.

(3) *Precipitating Factors*: was the conversion preceded by crisis, or not? (Savage, 2000, p.7)

There was no obvious "critical incident" that caused the changes, but there may have been a "final straw" in a slow, cumulative process after decades of crises, scandals and revolts. Past crises appear to have led to schisms and an intensification of beliefs. The WCG experienced such crises episodically, or stumbled from one crisis to another. The death of the founder, Herbert Armstrong in 1986, and the illness of his successor Joseph Tkach in 1995, were important events. Prophetic failures disappointed the expectations of long term members. Financial crises were recurrent. According to Savage (2000, p.7), "Rambo argues that although some sort of crisis does precede conversion, it can be a slow, cumulative process where 'a final straw breaks the camel's back'."

At a deeper level, was some underlying “guilt” prompting moves toward change? The character of Armstrong and some of his leading assistants was the subject of speculation, and there may have been a shadow side to the leaders (reference can be made to McIntosh & Rima, 1997, and Narramore, 1988). Savage (2000, p.7) refers to studies of conversion where converts experienced emotional relationship difficulties in childhood. There was a high incidence of weak, absent or cruel fathers, and later strong emotional ties to religious leaders.

Savage (2000, p.8) refers to “relative deprivation” in regard to “needs.” She suggests that converts may not have been ready to admit to themselves what these needs are, or how much they feel them, but after conversion people give themselves permission to identify those needs and how they were deprived. What might these “needs” have been, in the old WCG? The theological position regarding salvation - relying more on works than on grace - could have provided an immanent sense of insecurity, thus assurance (in the classic Protestant sense) may have been a primary deprivation.

(4) *Personal Agency*: was the conversion passive or active? (Savage, 2000, p.8)

Savage (2000, p.9) refers to Lofland and Skonovd’s conversion “Motifs,” some of which involve “intellectual” conversion. In such conversions, belief precedes practice, without social pressure, and there is an element of self-conversion (p.10). If this occurred in the WCG, it would be expected that members received information over a period of time that would result in changed beliefs. It appears that the leaders were involved in this change process long before members were acquainted of it, and that the leadership’s deliberations were “intellectual,” rational but unsystematic. Reportedly, the wider membership were informed of changes in a staged manner, then exposed to explanations and justifications of the new beliefs. From that point, whatever dissonance that might arise could be dealt with by active searching for answers by those most affected and surprised by these changes. There are reports of coercion, threats, and expulsion of resisting ministers. There are no records or admissions of supernatural interventions, although the WCG has since the changes been tolerant (if not encouraging) of charismatic experiences. Neither was there any external pressure to change. There is no evidence of grass roots agitation for reform. In fact, most of the ministers and members were stunned by the changes.

(5) *Mental Health*: were the outcomes negative or positive? (Savage, 2000, p.11)

Without a valid baseline, “pre conversion” experiences may be misleading. This study does not attempt to measure “mental health” (or happiness) since the 1995 “Reformation” or to determine whether there were any negative or adverse effects. Savage (2000, p.13) discusses this approach in terms of the Piagetian view that cognitive shifts occur during disequilibrium - the person is able to “see” things differently when the current reality becomes dysfunctional. There are no records of the mental health of WCG ministers, apart from some suicides. The WCG literature has a “common sense” approach and there is no extravagant or psychopathic writing or behaviour recorded. There is only hearsay, recorded by dissidents, as to the negative experiences of members during the Armstrong regime in the past, but these are incidental accounts.

Earle (2001), a senior WCG minister, ventured a developmental study of Herbert Armstrong, based on Erikson’s psychodynamic perspectives, Fowler’s stages of faith, and Loder’s transformational model. The account of Armstrong’s life is candid but selective (nothing is said about the allegations of Armstrong’s incest, or other unsavoury matters; for this, see Robinson, 1980) but he is revealed as a flawed but converted “spiritual leader of great influence and integrity.” Armstrong’s successors have been presented in this light as well, and disaffected members traditionally have been labelled as “demon possessed.” The psychological well-being of continuing WCG members is not open to scrutiny but the aberrational opinions expressed on various websites by former members are cause for concern.

(6) *Source*: was the conversion “socially constructed” or “spiritually inspired”? (Savage, 2000, p.13)

Are there any records of dreams, visions, flashes of insight? Recent WCG literature (Albrecht, 2004) seems to tone down the supernatural element, and promotes a rational - almost rationalized - account of its transformation. The charismatic revival aspect is missing, even though the “spiritual” is a central dimension.

Savage (2000, p.14) returns to the question of attribution. She refers to Snow and Malachuk’s view that conversion is “a change in discourse, the way we speak about the

world.” This usually is “accompanied by a shift in consciousness.” It could be a deliberate substitution or alteration of vocabulary, without a real change of mind, under the category of “alternation” (Longenecker, 1997, p.xiii). Has the WCG simply begun to use another way of talking about their former beliefs? Some new WCG literature makes this point: the doctrine hasn’t changed all that much - just the way it is worded. Savage also refers to converts developing “a ‘master’ attribution, learned from the chosen faith community.” WCG members could have learned to attribute all changed, and unchanged, doctrines to the same source, that is, God. Older explanations of reality have been replaced with new accounts. That is, there may have been a change in discourse, a shift in consciousness, and the adoption of a new master religious attribution.

(7) *Self-Orientation*: individual versus relational goals (Savage, 2000, p.15)

Savage (2000, p.15) suggests that the “individualistic model of self in conversion studies lags behind the more social and relational view of self-identity in recent psychology: the self as dyad (a self formed in relationship to another).” Note that a rhetoric of “love” permeates Christian discourse, and that element is not absent in recent WCG writings. In contrast with its past, the new WCG seems “euphoric” with a new sense of shared positive feelings. The old WCG often was said to have restrained relationships, that is, the lack of love was noticeable (Dewey, 2004). However, the new WCG promotes personal growth and reconciliation, almost self-consciously as it develops its corporate identity as a new Christian church.

Savage’s analysis is a helpful framework within which to consider the WCG’s conversion although, in a limited study like this, it is impossible to test all the factors, as each contains elements of paradox and change in progress. What the new WCG church now believes is clearly evident in over 100 items of literature found on its web site (www.wcg.org) and the WCG attributes its conversion to spiritual intervention, that allowed it to look at the old teachings afresh and to replace them with mainstream Christian teachings where necessary. These new teachings and identity as a Christian church are con-joint realities for the WCG. However, the cognitive processes that facilitated this change, especially in the WCG leaders, will be considered next.

1.7 Cognitive theories of conversion applied to WCG leaders.

The role of relational and contextual reasoning (RCR) in thinking about beliefs (such as the Trinity) and the possible links to the new WCG's identity will form the substance of this thesis and will involve looking for signs of new ways of thinking, with possible relevance to conversion, to consider whether or not there is a cognitive underpinning to the WCG transformation (as opposed to other factors). This is a comprehensive approach although the common strand is the question of RCR's presence in the WCG's transformation. The objectives of this present study can be expressed as follows:

- (1) To identify the role of RCR in the WCG leaders' thinking, and its role in their new identity (this matter could be applied to the WCG's thinking and identity, via metonymy).
- (2) To consider whether RCR was consciously or unconsciously used by WCG leaders, to stimulate their understanding of the Trinity and, hence, their RCR capability and levels.
- (3) To appraise the usefulness of RCR as a theory and heuristic to explain the WCG's transformation.

The following chapters will deal with the feasibility of using complementarity thinking (now better understood as relational and contextual reasoning) in understanding complex beliefs such as the Trinity, and this will be extended into the use of RCR to situate such beliefs within a worldview in transition, with possible links to behavioural change and identity transformation. In this chapter, the following is given as a preview of that extended discussion.

On outward appearances, at least, the WCG has jettisoned some old beliefs and adopted new ones, and has given a theological justification for this in terms of a history of divine agreements (called "covenants"). To some extent, beliefs have been packaged according to their presumed location within a covenantal worldview structure, and not necessarily examined in terms of their own validity. Once the "new covenant" (which

can be called a paradigm) superseded the old, all that pertained to the old was exposed to re-evaluation. Each belief did not require individual justification: it either fitted into the new paradigm or it did not. In this way it was possible to re-contextualize an entire belief system within a new worldview.

Reich (2003d) suggests that the complexity of religious development requires consideration of a number of ways of thinking, of which RCR is only one. Cognition seems to be the common element, and a logico-mathematical construction of this is understood to underlie various stage theories that might explain how changes in the structure of thinking relate to not just content changes but transformation in the character of religious identity. But new content may become available or old knowledge might be seen in a new way. Whilst existing thinking may be based on existing structures, there is a degree of elasticity so that “the structures accommodate to the new information, and thereby are developing” (Reich, 2003d, p.3). The implication is that the structures of each stage are qualitatively different. Reich cites Piaget’s dictum that the task of religious cognition was to construct an intellectual frame around our core personal faith. But does this mean that the content is shaped according to the mental frame (structure)? If RCR is taken to be a structural dimension then changes or development in that structure would most likely lead to some alteration in content or belief.

Within a fixed polar structure, opposition would prevail unless there comes some imbalance between the poles. Reich (2003d, p.8) suggests that Oser and Gmünder’s theory of religious development involves such a number of polar dimensions, but with the possibility of “discrete changes in the relation between the two poles.” Therefore, some disturbance in the system could lead to different relations between elements, thus allowing for a restructuring that would permit a change in content. Reich proposes that RCR accounts for the logic of such a sequence, but this needs further exploration. Reich (pp.9-10) refers to Koenig’s arguments concerning a hard stage theory (rather than discrete restructuring/re-sequencing) because it is obvious that it is very difficult to identify the relation between structure and content. Likewise, the criticism is that placement at higher stages implies a measure of the person’s worth (indeed, their salvation prospects) and favours higher ranking for cognitive/intellectual functioning rather than the whole person. To counter this tendency, Reich (p.15)

maintains that for worldview development (which he does not directly relate to levels of RCR, even though the implication is that more developed worldviews correspond to higher levels of RCR), “each stage is adequate at the developmental level reached; it is not justified to classify the earlier stages as ‘inferior’.”

These points are important when considering the religious development of leaders and members of the WCG, for the consideration of the structural changes (underpinning content changes) in no way is intended to measure the person’s spirituality or religious status. In fact, the appraisal of RCR levels (as explained in the next chapter, RCR appears to have both a threshold and levels) is specifically related to the problem of understanding theological complexity, and not to the individual’s attainment of a higher level of consciousness or intelligence. Indeed, relatively high levels of thought are evident in earlier doctrinal positions. The beliefs were different, but it is hypothesized that structural change might have taken place – or, through reframing of inquiry, otherwise obscure and neglected possibilities were fore-grounded sufficiently to warrant a reconsideration of the bases for existing beliefs.

Reich (2003d, pp.17-18) acknowledges the work of Kitchener in describing stages of cognition. Reich admits that “it is the development of epistemic cognition that makes for a change of one’s world view and religious outlook.” Obviously at the basic, *object* reflection stage, one’s view of God would be tied to notions of beingness, that is, a definite being which possesses certain properties and can be measured or rearranged according to some theological schema. Even the next stage, *means* reflection, limits the God concept to ways of thinking and is prone to a negative theology. However, *self*-reflection is said to be the higher stage where an authentic position regarding the concept is taken, wherein the whole person takes in something of the transcendent. In this, theophany becomes epiphany; the believer has entered into the divine milieu. What has at first only appeared to be so now becomes a deep perception of some essential truth. The symbolic value of Transfiguration in the religious story is fulfilled in personal and corporate transfiguration eschatologically. That is, what is perceived vaguely in the “beingness” of God ultimately provides a realized Existence in humanity.

Reich (2003d, pp.19-21) re-states various claims for RCR, which guided the systematic interpretation (hermeneutic) of the WCG's transformation. In brief, RCR allows one to:

- “make sense” of complex beliefs like the Two Natures of Christ and the Three-ness of the Trinity. As will be discussed below and in later chapters, a reasoned and theologically productive view of Christ (in orthodox terms) was a necessary prerequisite for the WCG to engage meaningfully with the Three-in-One God concept;
- coordinate religious and scientific worldviews – which has been successfully accomplished in the WCG by its abandonment of a literalistic Creationist account of origins;
- develop religiously – especially moving from deeds and appearances as the basis for faith so that the WCG, in Piagetian terms, can be seen to have moved *from* egocentrism, concreteness, heteronomy, unilateral authority and mystical transcendence, *towards* objectivity, abstractness, autonomy, contractual reciprocity, and immanence;
- resolve cognitive conflict – which seems to have plagued the WCG for some time, at various levels. The failure of a religious system and its expectations (whether personally or apocalyptically) in the WCG's case was probably pre-programmed, as the theological edifice was constructed on defective foundations. By beginning to think in RCR terms (whether intentionally or not), the WCG was able to move towards stability and acceptance.

Reich's most recent account of RCR (Reich, 2003d, p.19) is given here in anticipation of the next chapter. Generally:

RCR is a distinct thought form, categorically at the same level as Piagetian operations, cognitive complex thinking, dialectical thought, thinking in analogies, etc., with which it shares certain operational components (such as isolating a given item among many others).

This definition justifies RCR's use within the broad field of allied cognitive stage theories and to some extent allows a generalized role for this kind of interpretation. Thus RCR is like these other approaches but operates, metalogically and dialectically, in and through them. More specifically:

RCR permits us to analyse the role and validity of explanations competing for the elucidation of a given explanandum ...

There are several embedded explananda in the present study, the major topic being the Trinity as a context for transformed thinking. Other topics consist of questions of changes in the structure of thinking as a way of understanding intellectual conversion, and the various questions of authenticity in change. This is brought about by the inconsistencies inherent in the WCG's transitional journey. A different kind of logic was required to deal with the problem of compatibility between old and new beliefs, identities and ways of navigating on this odyssey towards a less certain goal. The WCG leaders are being called upon to decide the path and the reasons for it, as a sign of their growing religious judgment. With reference to Oser and Gmünder's work, Reich (2003d, p.21) states that the religious judgment stages and RCR levels "rank correlate highly and significantly" {sic}, so that developing RCR and the evolution of religious judgment "go hand in hand."

Although the present thesis is concerned with complex thinking, as evidenced in statements of belief (that is, the content dimension), it is mostly interested in the structural characteristics of that belief. The concept of structure is present in Oser and Gmünder's (1991) work on religious judgment, where "deep-structures" (otherwise termed "mother-structures") appear to be embedded cognitive schema that "are latently present patterns of religious consciousness which people use for coping with critical life-situations" (Oser & Gmünder, 1991, p.33). Furthermore:

They do not deteriorate but rather surface in persons' verbal contributions, e.g., in discussions. These deep structures lie behind the linguistic reality. While knowledge-structures can be acquired rather quickly, a person's deep-structure cannot be altered easily.

This is an important point in the consideration of cognitive change in the WCG's case – in a time of uncertainty or crisis, it is the older schema that would operate. This would account for the WCG's recourse to authoritarianism to introduce the new freedoms, at least in the early stages. Although this might be a valid point for that period of transition, it in no way determines the WCG leaders' understanding and manner at this juncture of their journey. Nevertheless, there are elements of earlier thinking that probably underpin the WCG leaders' ways of thinking about questions like the Trinity (especially when interrogated in RCR terms). In other words, the “knowledge structures” acquired early in the transition phase may mask the continuation of older ways of thinking, in structural terms (both as theological constructions and their explanation).

It can be argued that “The character of theology as a system comes to expression in the fact that theological reasoning makes explicit the structure of its knowing, thereby demonstrating the connections in its structures” (Oser & Gmünder, 1991, p.150). This can be demonstrated at the concrete level as “the correlation of the various systematic-theological concepts, such as the doctrine of God or Christology, with the stages of religious judgement” (p.150). What this seems to suggest is that a person's explanation of the content of a complex doctrine, like the Trinity, reveals the structure (level) of their thinking (that can be a composite of RCR and religious judgement). Presumably, those able to explain the doctrine in terms of its inherent complexity, and confirm their understanding by drawing out relevant implications of the doctrine, would be identified as operating at a higher level on these measures.

1.8 The Doctrine of the Trinity as a Paradigm for Change

To proceed with this inquiry, it has been possible to identify a particular belief that does require a special way of thinking. Reich (1989b, 1990a) argues that the doctrine of the Trinity is such a belief. Although it is possible to state that a belief is held in or about it, Reich argues that a special kind of thinking is a necessary prerequisite for actually comprehending the belief, that is to say, to have an adequate cognitive recognition of the difficulties inherent in the doctrine. In effect, if someone were able to demonstrate the ability to reason in the way required of belief in the Trinity, according to Reich's theory this is an indication that the person may be able to comprehend the Trinity doctrine even if

they had not yet done so. If the Trinity doctrine already is comprehended, a readiness in the mode of their thinking is assumed. Reich's assumption is that this readiness is the presence of RCR which is a necessary prerequisite. The comprehension of the doctrine, following an inability to understand it, would indicate that a change in the way of thinking has occurred. However, it is not necessary for the person to believe in the doctrine whilst having a satisfactory understanding of it, and neither is it a sign of "true conversion" in spiritual terms if they do. It simply may be a sign of "conversion" in human terms. It might also be a sign that there has been an effective change in worldview, enabling the comprehension of other paradoxical beliefs, which form the "package" of changed beliefs that make up a transformed belief system.

As a qualitative study of written materials, it is not appropriate to state precise hypotheses that can be tested against quantitative data. The theoretical approach is drawn from philosophical premises, with some empirical demonstration, and is of a highly complex and exploratory nature. Yet it has proven to be of fundamental importance in other areas, such as nuclear physics and applications where paradox and uncertainty are characteristics of the phenomena to be studied, as explained in the following chapter. Given the enigmatic nature of the human mind, the sensitivities of the people to be studied, and the volatility of the church situation, the study is limited to this approach.

The "theses" for this inquiry, in general terms, relate to the viability (as a psychological epistemology) of Reich's theory of RCR, in an attempt to understand the transformation of a sect in terms of that theory. From Reich (2002b, p.125), discussed in Chapter 4, the present thesis may be expressed positively and precisely as follows:

Relational and Contextual Reasoning, as proposed by Reich - as a necessary but insufficient precondition for comprehending the Trinity - is present in the new thinking of the WCG's leadership, whereas it was not evident in their past thinking, thus demonstrating a change in their way of thinking and affirming their cognitive conversion, that is, transformed Christian worldview.

The logical application of the above thesis can be expressed more specifically, as follows:

- (1) Reich argues that RCR [A] is a necessary precondition for comprehending the Trinity [B];
- (2) The WCG leaders need to be tested on their current RCR [A] and comprehension of the Trinity [B];
- (3) If the WCG leaders are found to be using RCR [A] and do comprehend the Trinity [B] then this can be taken as support for Reich's theory (although it does not confirm it, because the theory has not been falsified).
- (4) If the WCG leaders are found to be using RCR [A] and do not comprehend the Trinity [B] then this also can be taken as support for Reich's theory, because [A] may be necessary but not sufficient for [B]. There may be other factors, as admitted by Reich, (202b, p.125), therefore the possible "insufficiency" of RCR may be taken as partly supporting, and partly falsifying, the theory.
- (5) If the WCG leaders do not use RCR [A] but they do comprehend the Trinity [B], then this falsifies Reich's theory.

These are general considerations but the hope is to demonstrate change in the WCG leaders' thinking. If they did not believe in the Trinity before (assuming that the belief was rejected due to lack of comprehension) but now do believe, that does not necessarily indicate a change in their way of thinking. The Trinity could be "believed" (that is, adopted as dogma) for entirely different reasons. The risk in Reich's approach is that RCR [A] and the Trinity [B] may be conflated so that the relationship becomes tautological. In that case, a mere demonstration of [B] is, *ipso facto*, demonstration of [A], and the mere fact of not demonstrating [B] is, *ipso facto*, demonstration of lack of [A]. To avoid this potential outcome, the materials representing the pre-Trinitarian position have been examined for signs of RCR and the WCG leaders' current responses have been contrasted with the earlier material. This is further explained in the chapter on Methods.

The next chapter attempts a synthesis of Reich's theory, based on a large output of scholarly papers in English and German (although discussion will be limited to English translations), to identify key elements of the theory that could be used to interrogate doctrinal expositions on the Trinity, itself an enigma to some. This is followed by an attempt to express a suitable hermeneutically-based methodology that is appropriate to identifying those elements indicative of comprehension of the Trinity. Chapter 5 reviews the intellectual arguments for and against the Trinity doctrine, with some reference to early historical attempts to engage scientific and Trinitarian thinking that has captured the imagination of the WCG's doctrinal formulators. Chapter 6 is a detailed analysis of the responses of the WCG's leaders to a survey that sought evidence of their current mode of thought, especially in relation to the Trinity, which will be considered in terms of Reich's theory of Relational and Contextual Reasoning.

1.9 Personal disclaimer

The Anglican Church of Australia has provided me with a spiritual home and essential theological education following my suspension of membership by the WCG in 1981. Since then, I have consulted with many former WCG leaders to gain their perspective on the Armstrong era. In recent years I also have had cordial discussions with current WCG leaders in California who have encouraged and assisted me in this research. I am mindful of questions of academic standards of objectivity and the inevitability of reflexivity in this kind of research. My earlier experiences with Armstrongism have been tempered by a long academic career and the valuable guidance of experienced colleagues.

The present thesis reports but attempts to avoid entering into contentious issues and is not intended to discredit the WCG or its leaders, past or present, even though some of the material presented by various sources appears to do this. I have brought to the present thesis a personal understanding of the organizational and theological developments of the WCG. The study proceeded with the cooperation of Pastor-General Dr. Joseph Tkach and the guidance of his theological adviser, Dr. John McKenna. I have also benefited from the advice of mainstream church leaders and theologians. All phases of the study were strictly supervised by the University of Western Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review of Helmut Reich's theory of Relational and Contextual Reasoning

2.1 Karl Helmut Reich

K. Helmut Reich was born 7 May 1923 in Germany. He studied physics and electrical engineering, earning doctorates from German and English universities, followed by studies in the social sciences. Following his retirement as a particle physicist at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) in Geneva, Switzerland, he joined the Pedagogical Institute of the University of Fribourg as a Research Fellow, has collaborated in several professional papers on religious development and education, and has presented papers at numerous international conferences on the relationship between science, religion and education. He also is an adjunct professor for Rutherford University, with headquarters in Wyoming, and has recently been awarded an honorary doctorate in theology. A prolific author of journal articles on religious education and cognitive development in English, German and other languages, Reich's main published work is *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Reich, 2002b).

Probably due to its emerging and exploratory nature, Reich's work to date has been incorporated in few psychology textbooks (except in the field of psychology of religion; see Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 1996; Paloutzian, 1996). Even so, Reich was given a Templeton Foundation award and received the 1997 William James Award of the American Psychological Association (Reich 1998a). Reich's *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* has been reviewed by ESSSAT (2002) and in a special issue of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* (Albright, 2003; Raman, 2003; Teske, 2003; with a response by Reich, 2003a). According to Reich, his work has engendered several postgraduate theses in German universities.

An introduction to and summary of Reich's explorations in cognitive psychology is attempted here, with the aim of identifying practical ways of using his theories in the analysis of changes in the structure of belief with a religious content. Apart from Reich's book (Reich, 2002b), this chapter might be the first synthesis of his work in English. The readings and this thesis were discussed at length with Reich on his visit to Australia in August, 2004. It would be impossible to cover every detail of Reich's writings, which span psychology, education, philosophy, science, culture and religion. Selective use of his material has been directly related, as far as possible, to a study of change in the doctrines, identity and mission of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG).

2.2 Brief background to Reich's writings

From the mid 1980s, Reich has explored how various competing theories could be harmonised or, at least, taken into account in the explanation of complex problems. Based on concepts familiar to particle physicists, this initially related to an integration of the development theories of Piaget (1972), Kohlberg (1981), Fowler (1981), Erikson (1965), and others. Then Reich moved into ways of understanding how individuals might hold apparently contradictory beliefs, whilst avoiding cognitive dissonance. The theoretical approach has been eclectic in the quest for a unifying perspective, and the approach is more a perspective entailing imaginative connections between seemingly unrelated topics. This characteristic of Reich's work exemplifies the nature of the "theory" being proposed.

The usual subjects of Reich's investigations were children and adolescents whose religious development involved a change in cosmogony. Their explanations appeared to move from mythical or faith-based ones to more scientific ones. In such cases, older beliefs no longer were accepted as being logical. Moral judgments moved from the absolute to more relative ones. The rationality of Christian theology and spirituality in a material universe was questioned. Those reflections that took into account complex and non-compatible possibilities were deemed to be operating in a way comparable to "complementarity" in physics (the wave/particle characteristics of light) and were given a higher value in a developmental scale that somewhat parallels other stage theories (for a comparison of these, see Helminiak, 1987).

In 1985, Reich entered the field of psychology with a paper presented to the American Psychological Association (Reich, Fetz & Oser, 1985). The earliest papers in German (Reich, 1987a, 1987b) dealt with complementarity and cognition (based on Reich's work as a physicist). An English language paper soon followed (Oser & Reich, 1987). Since then numerous papers have been published, mostly in journals dealing with religious education. Reich has chapters in various edited books (for example, Oser, Reich & Bucher, 1994; Reich, 1991; Reich, 1992a; Reich, 1996d; Reich, 1998d; Reich, Oser & Scarlett, 1999; Reich, 2002a). He also has contributed items to the *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion* (Reich, 2003b). The synthetic character of Reich's theoretical opus can lead to an exposition of it which is superficially disjointed, but in this survey there is an eye for threads important to the application of the perspective to the case study. As such, the review must be selective and condense much material that Reich uses to support his theory (which often appears as a metatheory).

Reich's theory is summarized in well-known psychology of religion texts. It is given a page in Paloutzian (1996) and some space in Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger and Gorsuch (1996) who, referring to the possibility of a unified approach to the diversity of theories in the psychology of religion, comment that "Reich's beginning could stimulate further integrative conceptualizations" (p.64) and offer this summary (p.90):

Reich proposes a kind of developmental analysis involving five different levels of complementarity reasoning. Essentially, these evolve from a very simplified (true-false) resolution of different explanations, through careful consideration of various competing explanations, to possible links between competing explanations and possibly even the use of an overarching theory or synopsis to assess complex relationships among the different factors. This analysis is similar to "integrative complexity" analyses of religious (and other) thinking ...

This chapter sets out to identify the roots of complementarity thinking and its evolution into relational and contextual reasoning (hereafter, RCR). The potential and limitations of this way of thinking are considered, particularly in regard to any methodology that can be applied to a study of how the WCG changed its position on complex doctrines, and the significance of this for the personal transformation of its leaders. The WCG revision of its theology, specifically its understanding of the Trinity,

a Christian doctrine that many perceive as being paradoxical, is introduced in this chapter in relation to Reich's theory, but more extensively analysed in later chapters. Reich's theory draws inferences from logic that is supposed to underlie thinking about the Trinity that may be useful in analysing religious/cognitive conversion, which makes it peculiarly suited to a study of the WCG's changes.

2.3 The idea of complementarity

The term "complementarity" has been used in discussions on the relationship between science and religion, drawing from that perspective in quantum physics that allows for the co-existence of alternative explanations for physical phenomena (such as the wave/particle aspects of light). This has ranged from the larger topic of religion and science being "compatible," to the application of quantum physics – either directly or by way of analogy – to apparent contradictions or paradoxes in religious belief. One approach has been called the "domain" theory, where differing explanations are recognized because they are legitimate within their respective "compartments" (Oliver, 1978). Yet there has come about a convergence, towards a relational paradigm, where objects are said to share properties mutually and indivisibly with the systems they are interacting with. Within this perspective, all reality is understood as a network of relationships.

Bedau and Oppenheim (1961) objected to a loose application of the term complementarity by religionists like MacKay, and confined their explication to the original paradigm case, within quantum mechanics as proposed by Niels Bohr (Danish Nobel laureate, 1885-1962). Whilst it does seem likely that paradoxes are removed at the micro level, some claim that it remains necessary for effective interpretations to be in "the language of classical physics" (Bedau and Oppenheim, 1961, p.220). They argue that the dilemma for those using this approach is that the paradoxes reappear when such language is used. To overcome this, some have proposed a multi-valued logic but Bohr is cited as being opposed to this as being unsuitable. Therefore, it is objected, "it is clear that Bohr's concept of complementarity does not require a deviation from the two-valued logic of classical language," in effect rejecting a three-valued (or trivalent) logic (p.223). It is argued that "the removal of a paradoxical situation – without which the need for complementarity in QM simply does not arise – is a condition on the

introduction of complementarity” (p.225). Consequently, they claim, uses of the term complementarity outside of quantum mechanics “are at best examples of *non-compatibility*” (p.226). As Reich makes use of trivalency (involving more than two, but usually only three) in the construction of his theory, he later accepted the limitations of the term “complementarity” in the area of psychology (since it might imply a kind of dualism) and replaced it by the expression “relational contextual reasoning.” Before that, the term “complementarity” is widely used in his early writings.

The “roots of complementarity,” as understood by Bohr prior to his formulation of the physical theory, seem to be embedded in the work of William James in the area of consciousness (Holton, 1970), thus legitimizing its relevance to psychological research. Earlier to that realization was Bohr’s interest in religion and philosophy, particularly the dialectical writing of Harald Høffding (1843-1931), who wrote the first Danish textbook on psychology and also became an admirer of James. Høffding was also heavily influenced by the existentialism of Kierkegaard (itself a product of German Romanticism, upholding individual subjectivism against the rationalistic objectifying of Hegelianism). In this tradition, “Truth cannot be found without incorporating the subjective, particularly in the essentially irrational, discontinuous stages of recognitions leading to the achievement of insight” (Holton, 1970, p.1041). Høffding understood Kierkegaard’s commitment to a decision of the will – which was thought of as leaping in stages, so that there is no continuous, unbroken progression in spiritual development (p.1042). Bohr himself was an ardent dialectician, exploiting “the clash between antithetical positions” (p.1044) in the pursuit of making complementarity “the cornerstone of a new epistemology” (p.1045).

The application of complementarity to non-physical fields is problematic. When apparently unrelated or contradictory matters are considered together, as is the case in a religious commitment held concurrent with a scientific worldview, the logic of the problem would need to be related to different observations. A relationship may be “logical” from one standpoint but not from another. Bohr’s idea may be paraphrased as follows: “If we acquire knowledge of a situation by different modes of interaction, the description found valid in one mode may be inapplicable in another, and more than one description may be required to do justice to the situation” (MacKay, 1974, p.227). Thus both observations may be taken into account, as long as there is a common reference,

but this does not remove the apparent contradiction. The logical propositions still share the same plane, but some situations require a “hierarchical” explanation, involving “levels of description” (p.230). Applying this to religious matters, MacKay (p.238) asks “what of the operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion and sanctification vis-à-vis psychological mechanics?” MacKay suggests that both may be taken into account, but within hierarchical complementarity. That is, “The distinction between genuine and spurious conversions cannot be made in terms of psychological explicability but only in terms of the appropriate spiritual criteria” (p.239). This refers to the idea of double-causality in religious conversions (that is, both spiritual and psychological processes are at work).

Reservations about the scientific premises, used by MacKay and others, have been voiced by Sharpe (1984). Sharpe acknowledges that MacKay bases his use of the term complementarity “on a logical scheme independent of the physics’ use” (p.2), but is concerned about the notion of “hierarchy” (which Sharpe insists cannot be derived from the physics use of the term). Sharpe thinks that MacKay’s model for correlating science and theology is “too confused” and he suggests that the label “complementarity” be dropped (Reich at a later stage also moved from that term to RCR). Sharpe proposes an “integrationist” model, at least in regard to the science-religion connection. He pictures “a system of knowledge as having different overlapping and interrelated layers” (p.9), which may also be applied to a “particular incident” in theology. But it is not clear how the proposal could be related to the problem of understanding theological paradoxes.

Opinions about the value and meaning of complementarity sharply differ. Some claim that Bohr’s ideas proved to be elusive, incomprehensible and fragmented (Beller, 1992, p.148), an easy target for entrenched scientific paradigms (Kuhn, 1970) and subject to the politics of academic citation (Crane, 1972). It is unnecessary for us to deal with the specifics of how this theory emerged, or what it hoped to achieve, as our purpose remains the accounting for its use by Reich as a heuristic for explaining cognitive development and resolving paradox. Perhaps the parallel between Bohr, and Reich’s interest in his work (both worked as nuclear physicists), is well stated by Beller. Recognizing Bohr’s affinity with Høffding’s and Kierkegaard’s philosophies, she writes: “For in Bohr’s case we are dealing not merely with the content of ideas, but with

a unique scientific style, with an unusual approach to problems, with legitimation of an uncommon way of solving them” (Beller, 1992, p.178). This could also be said about Reich’s writings. Whatever the alternatives, complementarity “gave meaning to Bohr’s spiritual life” (p.180).

Reich (1990d) acknowledges MacKay's suggestion regarding the use of “complementarity” and Barbour's caveat that the concept should only be used intra-disciplinarily. Reich (p.370) argues that it is necessary to go further:

- “the inquiring system has to be adapted to the problem structure.”
- religion is not a “system that can be understood from analysis of its appearance or from a single manifestation.”
- the religious “system behaves so differently under different circumstances that different categories of explanations are required.”
- within religion, "all manifestations are linked 'internally'."

From the above, Reich appears to suggest that internal linkages denote the presence of complementarity reasoning. This is readily observed in paradigm shifts within a field of knowledge (for example, Jesus the Prophet to Jesus the Messiah; see Fredriksen, 1988). However, before accepting such a shift, it may be thought that “positing such a link is logically incompatible, paradoxical, or even absurd” (Reich, 1990d, p.370) but, unless a suitable way of thinking is employed, there would be no advance in understanding.

Reich goes beyond MacKay's “logical complementarity” and argues for “epistemological complementarity” (Reich, 1990d, p.370). He argues that it should “go beyond Piagetian formal operations” and involves both “analogical and dialectical thinking” (p.371). Ultimately, complementarity is to be of “heuristic value” and “references” to one thing or another are called “functionally coherent units” (p.371). That is, the “reference” functions as a unit because it has concepts that seem to be brought together even though there is no “logical” reason for this. Perhaps there are two planes of analysis here: an attempt to explain how the unit (reference) functions in terms of its constitution, and attempts to explain how the unit (reference) might relate to other units (references). For example, type 1 would be an attempt to explain the God-man

entity (in terms of the Chalcedonian Definition, re the “two natures” of Christ, explained below) and type 2 would attempt to explain how religious and scientific explanations interrelate. In respect to the present thesis, the general case study involves the leaders of a transformed sect, but the specific focus of inquiry relates to their ability to explain the Trinity doctrine (as an example of complementarity in action). In terms of the above, the Trinity becomes the “functionally coherent unit” in respect of which RCR is determined, as set out in Chapters 3 and 4.

Reich (1991d) explains two operative approaches to complementarity, namely parallel and circular. *Parallel Complementarity* follows Barbour's thinking (see **Appendix C**), where A and B “are of the same logical type ... and are used in the same paradigm community” (p.381) so that one has a foot in both camps - one in familiar “uncontested territory” and the other in “the new construction that results from thinking in terms of complementarity.” However, “An explanation in terms of one model limits explanation in terms of the other (parallel) model.” This can be applied to the Trinity, as explanandum, when the nature of complementarity is compared with it. To explain *Circular Complementarity*, Reich (pp.382-383) refers to Weizsacker's observation that Bohr “never defined complementarity but illustrated its meaning by ... examples.” Bohr apparently asserted that “the nature of our awareness entails a complementarity relationship between the analysis of every concept and its immediate use” (ibid.). If the Trinity is the object of study then, *in circular complementarity, the Trinity's innate complementarity and the Trinity's relationship with complementarity ways of attempting to understand it stand together.*

The idea of complementarity has been studied also in the context of literary deconstruction theory (Plotnitsky, 1994), bringing together the works of Bohr, Jacques Derrida and Georges Bataille. Bohr is identified (by Plotnitsky) with a tendency to anti-epistemology and anti-Hegelianism (p.11), but why this is anti-epistemological is obscure. According to Plotnitsky, the work of producing analyses of any idea “must employ diverse – and at times conflicting or mutually incompatible ... - configurations ... operative within the same framework, but without lending themselves to a full synthesis, Hegelian or other” (p.73). Furthermore, “Complementarity ... entails a multiple parallel processing of terms, concepts, metaphors, problems, texts, frameworks, or even fields” (p.73). Within this “massive anti-epistemological agenda,

operating against continuum and against synthesis” (p.148), the practicality of complementarity (at least as it is practiced) shows that it simultaneously works towards unity and difference. Inherent in the theory, then, is an impulse to be expressed *that way*, so *the writings of the exponents of complementarity tend to reveal its operation*. It is interesting to read in Reich’s introduction to *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Reich, 2002b) that his exposition of his theory is a stylistic demonstration of it.

Complementarity draws attention to the inadequacy of a rigid understanding of Aristotelian logic, for the purposes of resolving paradox. Fetzer and Almeder (1993, p.86), under *Logic*, state: “Until around the mid-nineteenth century, Aristotelian logic was widely viewed as exhaustive of the subject. But the introduction of the sentential function by Gottlob Frege revolutionized the subject, and today Aristotelian logic is recognized to be only a special and relatively modest fragment of modern logic ...”. Reich’s explication of “noncompatibles” uses a logic that is a feature of complementarity reasoning, allowing it to emerge as a more adaptable form of logic. Both Reich’s approach to a problem and subsequent engagement with the problem entail considerations of “logic,” but the connection between the two and the specific rules for applying any “post-Aristotelian logic” are developing, if not controversial, features of his work. Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle is used to argue that “noncompatible features are implicit in any situation” although some are “hidden” (Reich, 1990d, p.372). This may be taken to mean that a prominent feature may overshadow others but, if the context is changed, the hidden feature is exposed. Perhaps here the “contextual” of RCR is emerging in Reich’s thinking.

2.4 Worldview development

Reich’s initial foray into the child development field was in collaboration with Fritz Oser of the University of Fribourg, in Switzerland (Oser & Reich, 1987). They noted that when different “truths” about the same phenomena are presented, this may be experienced as stressful cognitive dissonance. However, some (at the higher or post-Piagetian formal operations) will be able to combine or coordinate truth claims in different ways. That may be expressed systematically, as a theory about the phenomenological contingencies, but *the level of this will be revealed through the subject’s expression of their theory*. MacKay’s definition of complementarity was

accepted as a way of explaining how a “logical category,” involving descriptions with a “common reference” although “individually complete,” may be “formulated in a different, mutually exclusive context, and possibly involves separate knowledge domains and/or different conceptual levels” (Oser & Reich, 1987, p.179). Some opposing statements may involve special cases which do not necessarily exclude other types of relationships (that is, “opposition” is not the only way the entities could relate) and there may be motivation to overcome “contradiction.”

Wood's categorization of problems (Wood, 1983, cited in Oser & Reich, 1987) is accepted by Reich, and consists of: (a) Compatible (nature and nurture); (b) Nonconflicting (psychology and sociology); and (c) Contradicting (light waves or particles). Of significance is the inference that *how persons classify problems may reveal their level of development*, which opens up the possibility of incorrect categorization. Apart from taking age differences into account, developmental level might be probed by reference to several knowledge domains. The study's method consisted of asking participants to nominate one of two apparently contradictory answers, followed by interviews to probe the reasons for choices made. The aim was to discover “the structure of the subjects' thinking, coordinating and argumentative process” (Oser & Reich, 1987, p.182). Subsequently, meta-theoretical questions were asked. This study resulted in a table of five levels, which underlies much of Reich's later writing (**Appendix B.**) During this early stage of investigation, participants were not representative, and their verbal responses revealed elaborated speech code and cultural influence. Accounts of the “structure” of responses relied on description and interpretation, rather than formal logical rules. Nevertheless, the finding was that “thinking in terms of complementarity progresses from ignorance to first vague hunches, to hesitant adoption, and on to becoming a spontaneous routine process” (ibid., p.184) and was independent of the knowledge domain and the type of theories involved.

Reich (1989a) found that, at some point, it is apparent to adolescents that some world views are incompatible. This is a “critical” event that must be dealt with to pass on to the next stage of development. Reich suggests that the achievement of complementarity enables progression. “Complementarity enables people to co-ordinate 'conflicting' statements and to arrive at synoptic points of view” (p.62). In the context of “conflict” between religious and scientific worldviews, it is evident that adolescents are

opting for the science and abandoning religion. Whilst the sociological dimension is acknowledged, cognitive structure may account for some of this movement. Reich identifies theodicy (how to account for evil when a good God is said to be omnipotent) and belief in creation and/or evolution as central areas of concern. The early childhood view of comprehensiveness gives way to the view that God intervenes “only in special situations,” if at all. As formal reasoning is acquired, rational explanation is required, and inadequate explanations (of the same thing) are jettisoned. Reich (1989a, p.63) reveals a key point:

When we speak of complementarity in thinking, we are referring to the way in which two or more descriptions or explanations of the same reference-object are co-ordinated Such descriptions or explanations pertain to different categories, are not independent of each other, but neither is there a causal relationship between them.

There followed a helpful description of the five levels - A or B, A and B, etc. - and how children of various ages responded to questions, then moved from “childish” to more mature explanations. The increasing influence of “scientific realism” was noted – “this will often be so powerful that it will be equated, however mistakenly, with logic itself” (p.66). Reich then asked if anything can be done about “cognitive dissonance.” He acknowledged that people know that there exist “different kinds of truth, such as conventional, empirical, logical, moral, religious and personal” (p.66). Following Luckmann (1987), Reich claimed that it is also necessary “to distinguish between various levels of metaphysical transcendence ... and symbolic meanings” (p.66). The answer referred to complementarity as a possible contributor. Rather than impose a systematic application of complementarity-promoting strategies, Reich allowed for a naturalistic, laissez faire, outcome due to his confidence in young peoples' ability to arrive at solutions appropriate to themselves. “The task of the adult is to provide suitable opportunities, and to stimulate with information and counter-suggestions when required” (p.67).

At this early stage of using complementarity theory, Fetz and Reich (1989) considered the development of worldviews in terms of cognitive-partial factors, such as:

- (1) *Logical thought and levels of reflection.* Contradictions occur if a belief system is presented in different contexts in an uncoordinated manner. How a person deals with this contradiction is influenced by their current level of logical thought and reflection. The *means* of reflection on an object involves both individual and systemic thought. This “epistemology” may be implicit or explicit, and is active even in children-adolescents.
- (2) *Ontology: propositions about existence and categories of reality.* At different stages, a person will think differently about what exists and how to think about that.
- (3) *Belief systems and their coordination.* A person faced with (apparently) contradictory beliefs will attempt to be consistent in their thinking. This may involve rejection of one belief, or retention of both but under certain conditions. A positive coordination may be an indication of complementary thinking; where there is an awareness of this possibility, true complementarity “presupposes that the particularities, the explanatory power, the validity and applicability criteria of each system as well as any links between them are understood in depth” (p.48). A common reference domain or object must be involved.
- (4) *Religious development.* This is understood in terms of consciousness or judgment. With maturity, “the relationship between a person and an ultimate being” (p.48) has complex and paradoxical dimensions: autonomy and connectedness, differentiation and integration, universality and idiography.
- (5) *World-views.* Both image (*Weltbild*) and interpretation (*Weltanschauung*) are meant here. These elements are constructed with the child's cognitive tools (reflection, coordination, critical judgment) operating with material ingredients (the beliefs). As structures change with stages, so do worldviews change.

Semi-structured interviews were used to probe the above structures and processes. Scoring of religious judgment followed Oser and Gmünder’s work (later published, 1991), and a system was devised for “artificialism,” or belief that the world was created in a manner similar to human workmanship (Fetz & Reich, 1989, p.47).

Results showed that children increasingly relied less on anthropomorphic explanations. Reflection on the object (that is, Creation) increasingly was supplemented by reflection on cognitive means. Of the 60 subjects interviewed, one third was re-interviewed 3-5 years later. Five were selected for intensive case study. Each account was “scored” at being at a level (apparently qualitatively, because the "score" seems to be a subjective appraisal of the child's explanations) in terms of the following:

- *Worldview* (artificialistic, or reflected, or naturalistic).
- *Level of reflection* (about objects, or on means).
- *Coordination* (each belief system has exclusive validity in its respective domain, or evolving toward complementarity, or one belief system is accorded exclusive validity, or both systems without claims to exclusiveness, or complementarity reasoning).
- *Religious consciousness* (stage numeral) (see Oser & Gmünder, 1991, p.12).
- Evaluative summary.

The discussion on the pastoral implications of the above notes the durability of early-acquired images and concepts, and the possibility that within that legacy there will be ingredients seminal for later development. Thus those ideas, or persons nurturing them, provide “a 'hand rail' that allows the child and the adolescent to 'climb up' in safety” (Fetz & Reich, 1989, p.58) The authors put it this way: “in the long run a person will only accept durably what fits into his or her world view, and resonates with his her own experience” (p.58). The authors advocate that children be exposed to multiple domains, and be encouraged to interact within and between them. Amongst adolescents, there appears to be increasing lack of confidence that there is consonance between God's revelation in word and work. This sets up scripture and science in opposition, Reich (1990b) found in a study of German and Swiss children. The reactions of the children in this study, to their increasing awareness of difficulties with the childhood explanations, is understandable. But it is obvious that the children were taught something in the first place, against which they now reacted. Was that initial teaching the genesis of this problem? On page 1, Reich cites Nipkow's finding that ordinary people only focus on two questions:

- Does God exist at all or is God nothing but a human projection?
- Does God provide for the explanation of the universe ... and of the meaning of individual life? (the latter is associated with the meaning of “innocent” suffering).

Reich (1990b, p.66) assembles a number of theories regarding children’s progression to adult thinking. It is noted that children are actively “theoretical” in this passage, leading to “self autonomy” but within a “modern social structure.” In the industrialized world, it is thought that pro-social (rather than conformist) worldviews will emerge (p.67). This reveals the development of a personalized (yet pro-social) moral imperative, an ethics where “justice” must prevail, even though that justice is no longer seen in theocentric terms. It is a matter of “what is good for society (is good) because that is good for all of us (individually).” It speaks to human autonomy (in the proper sense of the word: self-regulation). This also speaks to a *Zeitgeist*, where there remains optimism for human potential, and nicely fits into the apex of various stage theories that culminate in full realization. It may be that the children in this case study (apparently from upper middle class backgrounds) simply expressed those values/norms as “intuitive affect” or “built-in bias.”

This situation is said to be the result of a “change in values” (Reich, 1990b, p.67) in young people. Churches and dogma (with their “conformist” values) are regarded as being out of touch with the open/pro-social inclinations of youth, with their quest for self-realization. As such, admits Reich (p.68), this is not so much a case of the intellectual clash between religious faith and scientific facts, as it is “the perceived clash of value systems related to one's everyday striving.” Reich (p.69) concludes by reporting a number of “remedies” proposed by several others, for the rehabilitation of religious education. They all appear to favour greater “relevance” and it is hoped that they will foster the development of children’s epistemologies. A major interest is the coordination of religious and nonreligious worldviews. Worldview is understood as related to questions of the origins of the universe and life (that is, Cosmogony) so that different understandings of this can be compared. However, the term worldview (*Weltanschauung*) properly involves a stance towards the cosmos (or civilization) based on interpretation and evaluation. In the context of Reich's work, it probably should be linked to Cosmogony. Only later does Reich make excursions into cultural and political

differences. That is, the term *Worldview* goes beyond scientific/religious versions of the origin of the universe.

Reich (1998a, p.4) is interested in “how persons react to the worldviews of others, more precisely, what the developmental features of that reaction are.” Reich anticipated that the expectations of the high end of his model required an unrepresentative sample of respondents; thus he selected people with “analytical competence, verbal fluidity, and general above-average knowledge” (p.4). This study - which commenced in 1989 - resulted in five hypothetical developmental levels. These levels result from Reich's assessment of the type of response given by the respondent, and then the language of that response appears to have been incorporated into a description of that level, therefore the empirical support appears to be circular. The “framework” which emerges, according to Reich (1998a, p.5), reveals that:

- there are clear structural differences between levels (singularity, plurality, coordination, integration)
- argumentation increases in complexity towards the higher levels
- language games (symbolic language?) appear at the higher levels

These features of advancement in thinking become more evident to the developing person, as they progress in their understanding of more complex material. The circularity of this is explained elsewhere in this present thesis - new ways of thinking lead to better understanding; in turn, the deeper the understanding, the higher the person “graduates” towards more complex thinking (or, at least, an appreciation of it). As discussed in chapter 6, this is what might have happened in the case of some of the WCG leaders’ cognitive development.

2.5 Development of religious thinking

According to Oser and Gmünder (1991), their approach to the development of religious thinking (from which Reich draws) has a theoretical grounding different from that of James Fowler. They place Fowler’s work in personality theory rather than cognitive psychology (p.40). Oser and Gmünder fault Fowler’s stages as being unsystematic, confusing and unconvincing (p.43). When Reich (1993a) dealt with

cognitive-developmental approaches to religiousness, Fowler (1993, p.175) responded that Reich seems to place the findings of the Fribourg School into the advantageous position of arbiter or “balancer” (thus “ideal and normative”) of competing schools of thought, in regard to the “hard/soft” distinction, which by now, he claims, had become passé. Fowler (p.178) also faults the Fribourg School with missing a stage (Fowler’s synthetic-conventional, corresponding to Kohlberg’s conventional stage). Fowler alleges, “Instead of defining operations, the Fribourg group have defined beliefs and ways of defending them.” In regard to complementary knowing, Fowler suggests that his Conjunctive stage of faith includes “paradox and a logic of polarities.” Finally, Fowler (p.179) states “The Swiss seem to see the blend of Catholic theologies and inclusive humanism, that characterize their version of Universal Solidarity as content-free.”

Reich (2001d) also revisits the cognitive development underlying Fowler’s and Oser and Gmünder’s stages. Reich briefly notes that earlier theories (for instance, Elkind, 1971; Goldman, 1964) of religious development were limited to applying Piagetian stages of thinking to religious issues. Fowler, following the Piagetian stages extends them to faith development, and recognizes paradox at the higher levels, for example Stage 5 – which he explains in terms similar to complementarity. But Reich (p.2), commenting on this, says that Fowler was referring to dialectical thinking – whereas Reich pegs Fowler’s stage 5 at RCR level 3-4, in terms of complementarity reasoning. Likewise, Reich pegs Fowler’s stage 6 (synthetic thinking) to RCR level 5. The apparent disagreement between Reich and Fowler seems to revolve around the question of how dialectical thinking operates in these stages.

To illustrate various progressions in thinking about religion, Reich reproduces Fowler’s “Stages in Selfhood and Faith” (Reich, 1990d, p.376, Table 2), and Oser and Gmünder’s “Stages of Religious Consciousness” (p.377, Table 3). Reich implies that the higher stages in these schemas involve some kind of complementarity thinking, but the connection between Reich’s developing theory and these other presentations is not fully explored. However, Reich (p.378) says “By now it is clear that thinking in terms of complementarity can permit one to gain insight into the working of certain ‘functionally coherent units’. Its absence, in fact, can lead to cognitive dissonance ...”. The amount of “insight” and its effect might not be quantifiable but the RCR levels are expected to

give an indication of range and depth of reasoning approaches. Reich uses Fowler's, with Oser and Gmünder's, stage descriptors to show how functionally coherent units operate. It may be said that "cognitive dissonance" can be experienced by persons in transition between the Stages, but it is possible to avoid cognitive dissonance "under favourable conditions," when seemingly incompatible ideas are brought into relation (or already exist in such a relation) in a suitable context (p.378).

The example used to show this is the Creation/Evolution matter as viewed by adolescents. The adolescent state is characterized by the capacity to think independently; but also with uncertainty about what that independent stance will be. It may be a "search" period, not unlike that called "questing" (Batson, et al., 1993, p.166) although in Quest the specific link to adolescence is moot. Reich inquired of teenagers – Batson and co-workers sampled undergraduates and seminary students (p.171). Reich (1990d, p.380) gave examples of teenagers justifying their position regarding alternative positions on a topic, and their reasons were recorded. Those at a "higher" level give what would appear to be complementary reasons. At its most basic level, this involves "coordinating the competing explanations."

Maybe there is a need to clarify a difference between "natural" and "artificial" use of complementarity reasoning (CR). Reich suggested that "at least some" of the Chalcedonian Fathers thought in terms of CR, but it was obvious that some did not and the majority contributed to the same result. CR may be only one of many dimensions of the brain's cognitive activity, that might be used to bring about (1) a recognition that there is a contradiction, and (2) a way of thinking that either attempts to resolve it, or use it as an important way of dealing with complex issues. This exploration needs to culminate with answers to questions such as - Does CR develop (innately) or is it learned (experientially)? Can it be fostered - can it be taught? Or is it really something that can be inferred from observation? Reich (1991, p.84) says that "not all individuals who reach a given stage of logical reasoning will reach the corresponding level of complementarity reasoning." But he (p.86) also says that Fowler's Faith Stage 6 is consistent with CR. "Universalizing faith" is at the apex of Fowler's stages, but he admits that it is "exceedingly rare" (Fowler, 1981, p.200). What, then, distinguishes CR from Fowler's stage 6? According to Reich, CR is evidently present in some child and

adolescent reasoning, but it cannot be assumed that they have reached Fowler's higher stages.

The differences between Fowler and Reich are not settled (personal discussion with Reich, 2004). Complementarity and dialectical thinking are not discussed in Fowler (2000) but Fowler does present a view which unhinges faith development from changes in time, bodies or social roles. Relevant to the WCG's transformation is this statement (p.114):

we construct our *ways* of being in faith when we encounter disruptions or sources of dissonance in our personal or collective lives that our previous ways of making meaning cannot handle. The emergence of a new stage means the altering of previous ways of believing and understanding; it means constructing more inclusive, more internally complex, and more flexible ways of appropriating the contents – the substance and narrative power – of one's religious tradition.

However, this holistic approach does not explain how internal complexity (of one's appropriation of content) relates to the internal complexity of the nature and content of a belief, such as the Trinity.

In conjunction with the structural aspects of religious belief, the nature and content of belief as understood at various stages should also be considered. From Reich's insight on "understanding," belief can be interrogated as follows. Is the belief *authentic*? (what is really believed, and to what extent/depth/duration/stability). Is the belief *orthodox*? (whether the belief is correct, according to some standard). Is the belief *useful*? (does it meet the requirements for some action/outcome, and is heuristic towards such an end). Is the belief *relevant* and *compatible*? (whether the belief fits with the context and with other beliefs). Is the belief *logical*? (whether the belief complies with certain rules of reasoning). Is the belief *true*? (whether it squares with known facts).

The matter of "authenticity" also needs clarification. By this is meant whether the person genuinely holds to a core-belief, which might be possible if the following dimensions are involved and inter-related:

- “*dispositional belief*”, it is then a property of the person holding that belief and is displayed by that person in various (complex) conditions.
- “*doxastic belief*”, it is then something believed on the grounds of tradition or reason.
- “*rational belief*”, it is then subject to the rules of evidence and logical consistency. If following Bayes's Theorem, the “measures of evidential support must satisfy certain mathematical relationships characteristic of the calculus of probability” (Fetzer & Almeder, 1993, p.11). In the Bayesian approach, beliefs are replaced with degrees of belief which are said to be coherent “when they satisfy the requirements of the calculus of probability” (p.21). Perhaps this approach is relevant to Reich's discussion of the contents of the Functionally Coherent Units.

There are at least two aspects to this consideration. At the *level of cognition*, it is a matter of ascertaining how the person is able to explain the functionally coherent unit (the Trinity) satisfactorily in terms of what can be known about it, and this explanation must address the probabilistic characteristics of the subject. At the *level of relationality*, the person needs to display a level of engagement with the subject, so that their relationship with the subject shows a degree of complex interrelationship. This touches on the genuineness of the person’s understanding, as addressed above.

Reich (1997c, pp.110-111, Table 9.1) covers elements of religious development from infancy to old age. It appears as a comprehensive account, based on contributions from the above theorists. It is evident that a broad spectrum of theory is incorporated (from cognitive to psychoanalytical), and the imprecision of some concepts is acknowledged. A foundational premise is that this is a pluralistic universe (Skinner, 1990). Reich (1998a) shares James' view of varieties of thought, and the probabilistic nature of beliefs. A quote from James – “popular or practical theism ... has ever been more or less frankly pluralistic, not to say polytheistic” - reminds us of the fragile monotheism of ancient Israel, and theological confusion of modern-day Christians. Reich, in this section, simply claims that he has “(1) specified what a theory of pluralistic religious development needs to explain ...” and “(2) what could be some of its elements.”

Reich (1992a) presents a life-span perspective in which various theories (dealing either with conation, emotion, or cognition) are dealt with in reference to an Ideal theory - produced by the projections from these theories, conjoined to form a “typical theoretical developmental path,” although in Reich’s work the cognitive dimension receives more attention. Psychological development is, *inter alia*, “a restructuring of the psyche and its organization” (p.148). Reich admits that “the concept of development would seem applicable to religion only if religiousness is based on some psychologically meaningful reality” (p.148). Many affirmative statements are quoted, but there is an exception: “if religion is merely conceived of as the literal acceptance of certain dogmas and the carrying out of certain rites, then ‘development’ ceases once these have been learned” (p.148). This implies that beliefs, once dogmatically held, soon are transformed into mental straight-jackets, retarding thought and promoting rigid application. As such, knowledge that ceases to grow cannot be other than partly true.

In the case study it might be possible to find some WCG leaders who have learned the new vocabulary but who have paused in their development towards a fuller understanding of their new beliefs. Referring to research by Nisbet and Wilson, Reich (2001a, p.10) provides an idea that could explain this situation.

[T]he subjects in the present studies, and ordinary people in their daily lives, do not even attempt to interrogate their memories about their cognitive process when they are asked questions about them. Rather, they may resort in the first instance to a pool of culturally supplied explanations for behavior of the sort in question or, failing that, begin a search through a network of connotative relations until they find an explanation that may be adduced as psychologically implying the behaviour.

The efficacy of RCR for considering certain religious teachings belongs to the core of this thesis, and Reich’s discussion of this is invaluable. On the basis that “high-level RCR involves an understanding of the limited applicability of formal logic, and the concomitant insight into a possible context-dependency of the explanatory potential of partial aspects,” Reich (1998a, p.9) introduces the doctrine of the Trinity. Reich claims to have “found a clear correlation between RCR levels and response levels to the Trinity issue.” It appears that the ability to argue at higher RCR levels was a necessary

precondition for claiming to understand or explain the doctrine. Reich claims that similar observations apply to the Chalcedonian Definition (accounting for the Two Natures of Christ) and to Theodicy (reconciling the existence of both good and evil). In his concluding remarks, Reich states that RCR has an “inclusive relational perspective” that allows for a “synopsis of (seemingly unrelated) aspects” of some entity or idea. This approach and the assessment of levels that it espouses confirms RCR’s suitability as a theoretical domain for the study of the WCG’s transformation and as a possible means of encouraging the further development of its worldview.

2.6 Moral and religious judgment

Oser & Reich (1990a, 1990b) consider the relationship between moral and religious judgment, and worldview development. The discussion has relevance for considering the case study – especially in the matter of the Worldwide Church of God’s handling of its introduction of new beliefs. There has been some disquiet among former and current WCG adherents that the WCG’s moral consciousness and practices have not kept pace with its advances in religious thinking.

The authors (Oser & Reich, 1990a, p.95) ask: What is the logical relationship between morality and religion? “In early Greek philosophy the two realms {morality and religion} were recognized as distinct, but each interpretable in terms of the other.” Apparently this distinction is maintained by Vatican II which “underlined the autonomy of ethics with respect to theology” (p.95). Reich also cites Article 18 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (United Nations, 1978) which gives morality an existence apart from religion and heavier weight in cases of conflict between the two. Oser & Reich (1990a, p.97) also explain “psychical structures,” which might underlie judgment and worldviews, and refer to moral judgment and religious judgment. These include elements of reciprocity, relationship and representation. The higher stages, tending towards holism, involve some kind of complementarity.

Oser & Reich (1990a) report a study involving young people making judgments about actions considered to break the rules of their religious tradition. Some of these rules were essentially “moral” rather than dogmatic, and highlight the fact that apostasy

may be for reasons other than disagreement about beliefs (an area where heresy is more relevant). The outcome was that the “moral” rules or moral dimension of “religious” rules were overwhelmingly given higher standing than religion. Thus “morality conceptions” formed a domain distinct from those of a purely religious nature. However, are both Moral Judgment (MJ) and Religious Judgment (RJ) needed to operate together to solve a contingent question? As MJ & RJ are “psychical structures” it would be beneficial to identify their separate internal variables and the variables between them before proceeding to conjecture possible contingent relations. The authors (p.99) attempt to do so, as follows.

Firstly, it is accepted that if “the two structural cores {MJ & RJ} are the more independent of each other, [then] the higher the stage.” Perhaps this means that, with maturation and autonomy, the moral and religious domains are capable of playing separate roles although perhaps more integration (of a kind) would be achieved with maturity. There is a comparison of Kohlberg's MJ stages with Oser/Gmünder's RJ stages (because both have a Piagetian base). Loose associations are drawn between MJ and RJ and the authors' claim that the isomorphism decreases as higher stages are attained. Although both domains involve generalizations, the MJ is said to involve external orientations, the RJ internal ones. The highest stage of RJ is called “Communication,” explained as “inter-mediation.” At this level, the core thinking of MJ and RJ are “completely different.” The authors (Oser & Reich, 1990a, p.101) conclude that “this comparison shows clearly that the higher the stage, the fewer are the common elements, and the more autonomous is either structure,” although this seems to speak against the complementarity thesis.

In Part 2 of Oser and Reich's (1990b) paper, “Social Perspective Taking” is added to a “Tentative Simplified Dynamical Model,” which has as its “stem” a Piagetian “Cognitive Core” item from which the other concepts flow or upon which they are dependent. There is a discussion on how each predictive link functions. At the end (p.179) the authors admit that the topic is “more complex” than anticipated. The main point, perhaps, is that - if the Piagetian and Kohlbergian stages can be collated, so to speak, as a core or stem along which can be traced the increasing divergence of moral and religious judgment, then that would allow for a tentative prediction that, as the child moves along such a Piagetian/Kohlbergian cognitive core, the child's increasing social

perspective-taking expands (bifurcates?) their Worldview (WV) which results in separate domains of Moral judgment (MJ) and Religious judgment (RJ).

Reich (1990c, p.124), relying on Geertz (1973), also suggests that worldviews are enlarged as people return from ritualistic activity to their common sense world. The symbols in the ritual possess qualities of “factuality” and are absorbed easily into the pre-existing common sense world, thus the enlarged worldview is endowed with substantial qualities making it more tenable. Reich appears to think that there is a link between “factual explanations” and “moral justification,” so that “I forgot” is a (morally justified) excuse for some negligence. Rather than “reason” (make excuses in terms of rational process), people “give reasons” (use rational process to appeal to “facts”). Thus, like facts, reasoning is grounded in common sense experience.

In regard to Religious Judgment, it appears that it is operative in the search for answers - to questions such as: Why did this happen? Why is this happening? Why is this going to happen? Such questions may arise in contingency situations, and call for meaning-making - but questions are dealt with religiously, if at all, in terms of a “religious mother-structure” (Oser & Reich, 1996, p.370). This “is relatively independent of (other) cognitive structures ... ,” thus “religiousness becomes an instrument for putting the experience into a new equilibrium.” Furthermore, “The equilibrium, more exactly the underlying structure [apparently the reference is to “mother-structure”], is posited to be ontologically and metaphysically autonomous, and to resist all forms of secularization” (p.370). To achieve equilibrium, various aspects of the event have to be balanced. This balancing act operates differently at each stage of development.

Oser, Reich and Bucher (1994) consider the development of belief and unbelief, again mostly with adolescents. There is an attenuation of belief over the developmental period, and in some cases there is a shift from theist to atheist. An attempt is made to discover “commonalities and differences between their 'religious' cognitive structures” (p.39). However, the authors claim that “a transitional atheism is inevitable” (p.42), particularly at the critical phase between developmental stages. Karl Rahner (no citation given) is referred to re the need to overcome unsuitable concepts of God, as has been

the case in critical transitions in historical eras, and evidently is the case with stages of religious judgment.

In Reich's (and his associates') papers, complementarity (and later, RCR) is often mingled with concepts that relate to Religious Judgment. Given this feature, the way forward might be to create a generalized "Reichian" cognitive analysis which can be applied to the critical moments in the WCG transformation. That approach, whilst having holistic characteristics (akin to Fowler's), will seek evidence for discrete transitions between levels of cognitive operations, especially as they relate to the structure of thinking as applied to the explanandum, that is, the Trinity.

2.7 Cognitive competence

Reich (1990d) discerns some affinity of complementarity with Piagetian theory. In Piaget, "equilibration" involves "the spontaneous tendency of mental structures to perfect themselves by resolving contradictions" (p.374). However, there is a significant difference:

- In Piagetian logic, statements ultimately must be free of contradiction, because this is required by the underlying problem structures dealt with by Piagetian logic;
- In Complementarity logic, statements will retain paradox and contradiction, consistent with the underlying problem structures dealt with by Complementarity logic.

How complementarity can be thought of as a hierarchy is explained by Reich (1990d, p.386, footnote 9) as follows. At Level 1, there is "a single choice of description/explanation A or B." At Level 2, "both choices are considered to be possibly right" (taking into account weighting). At Level 3 "both A and B are judged to be needed, at least partially." At Level 4, "A and B are consciously connected, their relation is analysed, and the dependence of their explanatory weight on circumstances may be hinted at." Finally, at Level 5 "a generalized synopsis is reconstructed" (with supplementation ...). Such a hierarchy will later be applied to how the Trinity has been

conceptualized and how individuals have attempted to explain the Trinity and changes in their understanding of the doctrine.

To explain how a researcher might probe the level of RCR thinking, Reich (1992b) deals with models and metaphors. These are linked to the person's cognitive competence, in the following areas. It seems that the actual process of discerning the application of CR by someone to a problem, requires considerable cognitive complexity *within the analyst*, namely:

- (1) *Clarification.* Understanding communication requires considerable knowledge and insight. Ignorance in any part will lead to misunderstanding. Reich draws attention to St. Paul's use of Heraclitian logic [referring to Heracleitus, c.500 BC], which is cyclical rather than linear (thus impacting on how the diametrically opposite concepts – for example, “law” and “grace” - operate, and are to be understood). Reich suggests that our failure to recognize these requirements clouds our perception, and we are “unaware of much that we are doing in the cognitive domain” (p.132) and may resist further clarification, neglecting to uncover epistemological presuppositions.
- (2) *Logical reasoning.* Reich draws attention to recent studies showing that logical reasoning “may be more developed in one domain than in another” and “may often be applied (intuitively) more easily to problems of everyday life than to highly abstract problems” (p.133).
- (3) *Analogical reasoning.* This “is based on the mapping of functions, that is, relational predicates, not merely on shared attributes” (p.133). Thus analogies need to be constructed after a study of those predicates.
- (4) *Dialectical reasoning.* In Hegelian terms, all concepts are inherently contradictory, and resolve themselves by ultimately arriving at a new concept, which is likewise subject to the same process (thesis-antithesis-synthesis).
- (5) *Complementarity reasoning.* “This type of reasoning refers to the coordination of two (or more) 'theories' A and B which explain a (complex) phenomenon that

is not (yet) understood in terms of any unified laws or analytical procedures” so that CR is “situated between analogical and dialectical reasoning” (p.134)

If CR operates somewhere between analogical and dialectical reasoning, how does this happen? Ways of determining this are required, so that problems can be explicated. We must recall Bohr’s difficulty in persuading his colleagues of the efficacy of his theory, and the indeterminateness inherent in the complementarity notion. Its usefulness in the physical sciences apart, its usefulness in other areas, even as an overarching theoretical approach or perspective, needs clarification. The sense in which CR overlaps with analogical and dialectical reasoning requires clarification. If these types of reasoning are present in a problem’s description, and operative in attempts to resolve it, how can complementarity be relevant except as advice to try both approaches?

The preceding dilemma is partly explained in Reich, Oser & Valentin (1994), where Reich returns to the matter of how adolescents play a role in shaping their own intellectual development. In regards to cognitive change, the outcome is a mixture of knowing *more* (quantitatively) and *better* (qualitatively). It is possible that we are dealing with new mental representations that co-exist with previous ones (and even co-exist with future ones), called Worldviews, which depend on knowledge of events in the world, and appropriate levels of language to describe/explain them. In this perspective, a Worldview is an explanation: *why* is, rather than *what* is. If people can be conscious of changes that have happened, they might be conscious of changes that are happening. That is, knowing about knowing, using metacognition or mindfulness. In this view, the solitary thinker has been recontextualized, admitting the importance of social context, language and culture. “Absolute conviction” as an indicator of early, egocentric thinking gives way to social-consensual thinking, and relativity. Also, “experiential knowledge accumulated over time can lend authority to a person's judgment” (p.155).

The investigation is taken further by three hypotheses offered by Reich, Oser and Valentin (1994), and these can be paraphrased as follows:

- (1) People know that they know better, following a logical sequence. That is, once people become aware of having changed, they offer simple extrinsic and

intrinsic reasons for the changes (sometimes as attributions) and eventually more complex reasons are offered.

- (2) Related to the above, people offer reasons that include external authorities and internal insights, the latter increasing so that personal responsibility for beliefs is taken.
- (3) Combining 1 & 2, the complexity of external and internal factors increases apace, but the internal will eventually have more weight and the person becomes aware of the need for thought beyond their reach. Changes in thinking, at that point, could well be “in the mind,” then referred back to “reality” to impose upon it a worldview.

Item (3) above is critical to the WCG’s transformation. It appears that limited internalization of new or modified beliefs was evident during the WCG’s transitional period of change, as confirmed by several respondents to the survey of WCG leaders, although assimilation of schemas into each other may have occurred. As outlined later in the present thesis, there are signs of higher RCR levels in some of the current WCG leaders, giving hope for the emergence of a new worldview that could equip the WCG for further positive developments.

2.8 Reservations about complementarity

The formidability of people applying complementarity thinking to complex situations, unless its usefulness is acknowledged, is foreshadowed by Reich (Reich, p.387, footnote 16) who gives reasons why people shy away from accepting complementarity:

- Entrenched logics - survival value of one-sided action; high frequency of binary decisions in everyday life; negative connotation of paradoxes; identity benefits of one sided positions.
- Unfamiliarity with the logic involved.
- Wrong root metaphors (for example, naïve realism).
- Inadequate cognitive level.

The preceding reasons foreshadow some of the difficulty experienced by members of the case study – the content of many of the WCG changes required a different way of thinking, consonant with the characteristics of the new belief. Members were required to move from what was portrayed as “illogical” (the WCG rejected the Trinity partly on such a ground) to an unfamiliar kind of logic (that is, the Trinity) and from polarized thinking with clear certainty (expressed through dogmatism) to uncertain and ambiguous decision-making. Such a transition was portrayed categorically as moving from legalism to Grace, although the thought processes involved were not explained.

To the foregoing, Reich (1991, p.79) adds, “With this range of analytic and heuristic power complementarity reasoning often leads to conjoint lines of explanations that were previously thought to be either conflicting (calling for the elimination of one) or irrelevant with respect to each other.” Reich’s point raises a question about the reliability of findings arising from the application of his theory. Fetzer and Almeder (1993, p.120) define *Reliabilism* as: “The thesis that whether anyone knows anything at all depends upon whether their true beliefs have been brought about by a reliable belief-producing method ...” Internal Reliabilists expect that the believer be able to justify, or explain how the belief came about. External Reliabilists allow for reliable beliefs to be held without the need for the believer to explain how they came about. This latter category fits adequately with the “transformational” outcome of the WCG leaders’ acceptance of the Trinity doctrine, whereas the former is intrinsic to deep conversion which, as is argued in Chapter 1, goes beyond mere adaptation to change.

Applying complementarity reasoning to the WCG leaders - getting them to account for the Trinity, for example - might be very difficult because, based on the reasoning in the preceding paragraph, it may be that using CR is not dependent on the believer's ability to explicate the belief using CR terminology. Holding a CR-dependent belief may be an indication of CR being applied (indicating the possibility of External Reliability), but this raises a question about the independence of CR and of whatever it is thought to be a precondition. Perhaps in a way this relates to how Extrinsic beliefs are adopted - in such a case, the extrinsic belief may be held tenaciously, even emotionally, but the belief was not produced by Intrinsic means. Or at least the belief was not the product of thought; it simply becomes the object of subsequent thought. For a

discussion of the extrinsic/intrinsic dimensions of religiosity, based the work of Allport, see Hood, et al. (1996), and Paloutzian (1996).

Reich (1991, p.79) draws attention to a possible “inverse result.” Rather than the joining of ideas, in certain cases lines of description might be separated (untangled). Reich suggests this happens when a *causal* mode of explanation, being collapsed into a *personal mode* of explanation, is untangled by CR. However, it must be emphasized, Reich is using an analogy based on probability in the case of atoms: something happens at the subatomic level, and it is given a spatio-temporal description. Reich (p.80) then provides an extended discussion of how this applies to the problem of suffering and the Chalcedonian Definition (p.81). In both cases, CR is connected to “situation specificity” or “circumstances” (thus prefiguring the "Contextual" aspect of Reich's theory, as later espoused). Also in regard to the Trinity (p.82), Reich says, “the purpose of complementarity reasoning is not to explain away apparent paradoxes but rather to show their usefulness for providing deeper understanding in particular situations and under particular circumstances.”

Reich (1991, p.82) says “By now, it should be clear that complementarity reasoning is no simple thought process and that it emerges in fully developed form relatively late in life, if at all.” As such, most people are likely to be hindered in the deliberate application of CR to problems, and will have only a basic comprehension of its operations. Some may stumble into its application, without awareness of what they are doing (refer to what was said about External Reliabilism, above). Cultural and linguistic variables are possibly significant.

In regard to the need for a context-sensitive complementarity (Reich, 1998a, p.3), James' insight on “split consciousness” is cited - in a quote that uses the word “complementarity.” However, Reich thinks that James had “class logic” in mind. In James' reasoning, according to Reich, “complementarity involves a certain mutual exclusiveness.” Reich (1998a, p.3) then reveals the following re complementarity: “let me tell you why I use that term sparingly these days.” He is now concerned that the term has been employed in diverse ways (including in Derrida's Deconstructionism, Eastern Philosophy and so on) which generally refer to certain entities belonging together, completing each other, towards a holistic understanding .

As a result, Reich now thinks that it is essential to go beyond such a “vague notion,” because the “potential usefulness of the term - if there is one - depends on the precision with which it characterizes the kinds of relationships between the constituent complementarist ‘elements’ ...” It is also desirable to clarify the role of quantum physics in this, as that difficult field “acts as a barrier” to understanding the concept. Furthermore, it is necessary to distinguish the term from how it is used in (interpersonal) psychology, especially since in that field there are “two distinct usages, which bear little resemblance to what was thereby understood so far” (p.3).

2.9 The value of complementarity

Reich (1990d) concludes this paper by asserting that scientific and religious meanings inter-mediate; religion is necessary to complete human personality; and God has endowed humankind with relational capacity, for the purpose of relationship with God - as well as intra/inter personal and ecological relationships. These assertions imply the necessity of taking into account differing explanations in order to develop a mature, rounded grasp of reality. Drawing on research with children, Reich (1990d) asserts that:

- “thinking in terms of complementarity is a natural development, given an opportunity” (p.385).
- “thinking in terms of complementarity seems to be a necessary condition for reaching the higher stages of religious development” (p.385).

What emerges from this paper is a clear indication that Reich takes a liberal, elastic view of complementarity, to the extent of being prepared to apply it to embryonic concepts as long as they show potential for relationality. These ideas are more clearly presented in the context of religion, which Reich says “has been criticized for involving a logic of absurdity full of unresolvable contradictions ...” (Reich, 1991, pp.77-78). This apparent “contradiction” lies at the heart of the WCG’s situation – it had earlier distanced itself from the “illogic” of religion (to the extent of defining its identity outside of conventional religion) but now found itself having to find an explanation for its adoption of what it had heretofore designated as being illogical.

According to Reich (1991), apparent contradictions (between differing positions, identified simply as A and B) can be approached in a number of ways:

- (1) Acceptance. Contradiction/absurdity is typical of religious life.
- (2) Adjustment. A or B is jettisoned, or either A or B's importance/significance is decreased.
- (3) The problem is “explained away”, with shallow arguments or platitudes.
- (4) One can “explicate rationally why particular perceived contradictions are only apparent”.

Reich (p.78) suggests that option (4) is dealt with through “complementarity reasoning” (CR) and defines it:

The expression “thinking in terms of complementarity” ... here means coordinating “noncompatible” (neither compatible nor incompatible) theories or belief systems in such a way that they illuminate and limit each other when describing or explaining the same reference object or state of affairs.

However, option (4) raises the crucial distinction between real and perceived contradictions. In the case of real contradictions, recognizing that they cannot be combined would be a “higher” stage (of complementarity) and, in the case of perceived contradictions, showing how they are not really contradictory would also be a “higher” stage.

Upon adopting the Trinity doctrine, the WCG found itself operating cognitively in option (4), a breakthrough to complementarity thinking, an attempt to make sense of paradoxes, and attainment of non-delusional thinking (if it is accepted that believing that only the WCG has the truth, but no-one else has, is a delusion). . In this, the WCG (without realizing it) benefited from the applications of CR. These benefits, according to Reich (1991, p.78) include dealing with complex situations, apparent contradictions and paradoxes. Complementarity reasoning acts as a “heuristic, a useful device for a getting

at a genuine understanding.” The Trinity doctrine is especially relevant as CR is operative in matters where a unity consists of several modes, complete in themselves but not exhaustive. These modes are internally linked but fluctuate in recognisability.

2.10 From CR to RCR

In response to critics of complementarity, Reich (1994b) draws attention to the priority of the term in works by Kant, Høffding and Kierkegaard, later taken up by physicists and, allegedly at Bohr’s suggestion, applied to theology. Reich uses the term to “describe/explain particular ‘objects’ or events by means of at least two mutually exclusive notions, approaches, models, theories” (p.285). He relates the term to:

- (1) *Ontology* – where “a metarelation between classes of intensions* is posited. These classes belong to different categories, for example, “behaviour” and “ethics”. [* Intension, according to the *Macquarie Dictionary*, means an “exertion of the mind” or, as in logic, “the sum of the attributes contained in a concept or connoted by a term”.]
- (2) *Epistemology* – where “the various intensions are co-extentional ... (that is, they refer to the same explanandum) and belong to different, mutually exclusive categories” (for example, “creation” and “evolution”).
- (3) *Logic* – where “significant relationships other than causal ones are conceivable” (for instance, the God-man nexus in the Chalcedonian Definition) and where explanatory weights for alternatives may depend on the context.
- (4) *Methodology* – where the approach matches “the categorical specifics of the given complementary aspects, and take into account any possible coinherence of the other aspects” (for example, in the Trinity).

Thus complementarity reasoning (by now referred to as Relational Contextual Reasoning, although the substantive difference between the two concepts has not been fully explained by Reich’s writings or in personal discussion with him) is essentially “a pragmatic reasoning scheme,” not a provider of precise explanations (Reich, 1994b,

p.286). CR is the term used in the earlier writings and the transition to RCR is somewhat abrupt and obscure. The underlying concept (if not the terms) seem to have been used interchangeably, although RCR expands the notion of “complementarity” to embrace “relationality” and “contextuality”. Reich (1998a, p.7) calls RCR “a composite pragmatic reasoning schema” which entails an amalgamation of components that have utility for understanding religious development, if two of RCR's components are understood: *Grades of Cognitive Complexity, and Thinking in other logics than formal (binary) logic*. To demonstrate that RCR is “empirical” (thus scientific despite its imprecision), Reich provides quotes from children, which he claims “clearly demonstrate” RCR. In response to Sharpe’s (1991) criticisms:

- Reich says “I do *not* use the term complementarity in the traditional (class set) sense characterized above by R.J. Russell ...” (p.287). Russell had argued that complementarity was misused to refer to alternative, but supporting, views on a topic – which is not how it was used in physics.
- Reich defines his terms – “contradiction” doesn’t always mean opposition/ conflict, but could be “noncompatible” (p.288).
- Reich says that an “algorithm scheme” is intended to “stimulate” use of RCR, which is a “facilitator” (p.289).
- Reich recommends the use of RCR “to discover and reconstruct the mutual indwelling of characteristics of scientific and theological understandings” (p.289).

Obviously Reich is engaged in a prolonged task of theory-building. As an analogy to his task, Reich (1995a) presents Bechtel and Richardson's (1993) explanation of the development of complex systems. Their model involves flow charts, or algorithms. It is evident that the root metaphor, as used here, is “Decomposition”. The resulting entities function at a localized (specific and contextualized) level. Ultimately, “the properties of the system emerge because of the connectivity of the components” (Reich, 1995a, p.50). There is uncertainty at specific “choice points” (as in a decision tree). In this approach, heuristic models need to be revisable, for at decision points not enough information may be available, thus leading to a poorer outcome; one should be able to return to the decision point and make a better choice. Bechtel and Richardson

(1993) claim that their model “is particularly well suited to problems that are relatively ill defined, problems in which neither the criteria for a correct solution nor the means for attaining it are clear” (cited in Reich, 1995a, p.54).

As the intention of the present thesis is to explore the transformation of sect leaders, a particularly enigmatic exercise in this instance, unusual theoretical constructs (with innovative methodologies) might be justified despite the uncertainty of outcomes, even if for no other reason than that the unconventional theories of Reich are given scope for implementation. However, the theoretical constructs assembled to explain RCR appear to be unclear and incoherent, thus affecting the viability of this line of analysis. A critical approach to Reich’s theory, followed by a demonstration of its application, will be pursued taking into account the difficulty inherent in its explanation. According to Reich (1995a, p.54), originality in theorizing goes against the grain, as “Psychologically speaking, there seems to exist a human tendency toward simple, monocausal explanations.”

Reich (1995a) then refers to Piaget and Garcia's (1989) use of a universal sequence within which the above could be attempted:

- Intra - focus on single aspects
- Inter - realization that aspects may be connected
- Trans - development of overarching synopsis or theory

Reich (1995a) then suggests that Bechtel and Richardson's model could usefully be rethought in terms of Intra-Inter-Trans. This might lead to “surpassing classical logic where called for.” Reich sees promise in the model for examining conceptual relationships. There would be a series of movements up and down the decision tree, until interesting features emerge, that would provide unanticipated but fruitful results regarding the connexion between otherwise noncompatible entities.

By 1995, Reich’s theories were being explained to a wider forum, with more supporting material (Reich 1995b), even though much of this is descriptive and the precise applicability of RCR to research projects still required clarification. Referring to Kosko's work on “fuzzy logic,” where Aristotle represents “either/or” and the Buddha

represents “both/and,” Reich (p.12) states that classical logic “can be mentally stifling - even crippling - beyond its legitimate domain of application.” There follows a discussion of the difference between Piagetian formal operations (based on classical logic) and RCR. Reich describes Piagetian logic in a way that shows that it works quite satisfactorily (presumably if a different type of logic is not required). He does not explain RCR, at first, but shows how it is supposed to work.

As an illustration of how the use of RCR might be detected, Reich (1995b) gives as an example a Nuclear Reactor Accident. A sophisticated response is given by a respondent. Reich shows that the response best suited to the problem goes beyond Piaget (that is, classical logic) and claims that “Metalogical” reasoning is required. This is done by recognizing that there is a different underlying logic to the problem that must be taken into account. In summary, the hypothetical nuclear reactor accident involved interconnected technical and human factors. In common with a Piagetian response, the ideal answer took a systems approach, formulated hypotheses, identified variables and came to a general conclusion. To illustrate the distinction between this and the use of multiple logics, Reich notes that the respondent provided further information (the details are unimportant here) which Reich interpreted as indicative of logical variability.

Allied to the above, Reich (1995b, p.13) explains RCR in terms of several components, which are said to work together to give a comprehensive account of complex problems. The components are (A) Piagetian operations (“except the necessary use of classical logic” – this is Reich’s phrase), (B) Metalogical reasoning, (C) Cognitively complex thinking, (D) Analogical thinking, and (E) Dialectical thinking. The last three are described more fully to determine how RCR may be operationalized, in preparation for the methodology requirements.

(C) *Cognitively Complex Thinking.*

This involves:

- Differentiation (bringing out differences of fact, of possible interpretations, and valuing).
- Integration (attempts at linking various elements in order to arrive at an overall assessment).

Reich's approach in explaining RCR is to sometimes draw along-side several lists of characteristics in allied fields. This approach borrows from such lists to prop up RCR. For example, Baker-Brown's (Reich, 1995b, p.13) scale for assessing cognitively complex thinking is given. The range is comparable to Reich's RCR levels:

- (a) No differentiation, no integration.
- (b) Differentiaton begins.
- (c) Differentiation clear ("either/or").
- (d) Integration begins ("both/and" becomes weak possibility).
- (e) Integration explicit.
- (f) Systematic evaluation of possibilities and comparison of their likelihood.
- (g) "Elaboration of a framework that can 'house' the various considerations of the lower grades."

Reich suggests that (g) on this scale is equivalent to RCR.

(D) *Analogical Thinking.*

This involves connecting the unknown and the known. Reich (ibid:14) says that "an important and integral part of RCR (is) ... this searching for commonalities and differences." Here it appears that Reich must use other sets of knowledge (dealing with complex thinking) in an analogical way – Reich's theory thus draws validity from other theories (a case of an argument *ad verecundiam*), a point already made above.

(E) *Dialectical Thinking.*

This involves applying change to a situation in order to come to a solution. Reich (p.14) refers to Basseches' (1984) 24-point schemata. Reich uses seven of these points to show that they are present in the ideal RCR response to the Nuclear Reactor Accident example. Reich's précis of Basseches' points is intended to explain aspects of RCR, although some of the terms would be obscure to those not familiar with the sources. The list is provided here as a way of drawing attention to the *explanatory content* of RCR, that is, whatever is woven into its tapestry.

- (a) "location of an element of phenomenon within the whole(s) of which it is part."

- (b) “description of a whole (system) in structural, functional, or equilibrational terms.”
- (c) “assumption of contextual relativism.”
- (d) “assertion of the existence of relations, the limits of separation and the value of relatedness.”
- (e) “description of a two-way reciprocal relationship.”
- (f) “assertion of internal relations.”
- (g) “multiplication of perspectives as a concreteness preserving approach to inclusiveness.” (Reich, 1995b, p.14)

In the same paper, Reich discusses the “ontogenetic” development of RCR, claiming that - like Piagetian categories - RCR needs to be developed. To show the ascending levels (I-V), Reich quotes from responses to the Nuclear Reactor Accident case. Various “shapes and sizes” of complementarity are proposed below, although how this relates to the determination of RCR levels is obscure.

- “strong” complementarity – for example, wave/particle behaviour of light, or “emotional acts and their moral justification” by the actor - in such cases “complementarity aspects come into view *successively*.” (Is it that strong cases are linear?)
- “weak” complementarity – for example, “moral demands explained as resulting from absolute principles and an individual's capabilities” - in such cases “complementarity aspects are perceived *simultaneously*.” (Is it that weak cases are circular?)
- “nominal” complementarity – for example, as in the statement “The occupations and interests of the partners are complementary to each other” (where the ordinary use of the word “complement” is intended). The qualities that are complementary are extrinsic (that is, are outside the internal relations) - they need to be intrinsically linked to qualify for the term “complementarity.”

Because the developmental nature of RCR needs to be clarified, Reich (1995c) reports on the logic used by adolescents. Reich experimented with a Religious Education class for 15-17 year olds who were fixed (and defensive) in their arguments and definitions, especially about “logic” [understood as, What seemed right to them].

Reich attempted to change these adolescents' thinking, via an indirect route, to reach these objectives:

- increased relevant knowledge
- differentiation and integration of statements
- widening meaning of logic/logical

The adolescents appear to have limited their definition of logic to what made sense to them, personally. By that (limited) definition, whatever they thought was right was also logical (by the rule that no sensible person would contradict themselves). Reich set out to show that “here existed several types of logic and the type used must match the task on hand” (p.54). The types were:

- *Classical* - involving transitivity, reversibility, distributivity, commutativity, and separability.
- *Dialectical* - involving mutually defining concepts which change with time.
- *Quantum* - involving non-compatibility.
- *Fuzzy* - involving “entities which admit of more than two subdivisions”.

The above account does not address complementarity reasoning or RCR, or the ways in which the various types of logic can be compared with each other in reference to some problem, but it is implicit in the discussion. Perhaps a number of different types of logic could be brought to bear on a problem, in a complementary fashion. RCR, after all, seeks to take into account relationships that ordinarily would seem non-compatible, and would factor in any contextual information.

In a paper on a logic-based typology of science and theology (Reich, 1996a), there is a choice between:

- a single, symbolic formal logic based on Aristotle (and that classifies other logics as special operations or epistemological schemes), and
- a dozen different logics, not all formalized (Reich opts for this one).

Reasons for a logic-based typology are given by Reich. As there are high and low levels of abstraction, we note that at the lower end there is more concreteness, more detail, more understandability, more applicability (Reich, 1996a, p.152). Therefore, as high levels are very general, “How or why does the high-level abstraction add anything specific to what we do not already know, or can do?” The answer is that “communication is facilitated through the use of standard abstract terms,” and abstractions yield an “economy of effort.” Reich (p.154) returns to his starting choice but is flexible with definitions:

It makes little difference, however, whether, for instance, “dialectics” is called a different logic or a particular epistemological approach. More important are the ontological assumptions underlying different types of logic, and the application of the appropriate logic to a given problem or issue.

Reich (1996a, p.159) does show how complementarity is different from class-set logic. Reich says that in the complementarist understanding two classes with a common reference may be “relativized to a specific context.” That is, the context gives weight to one class or another. In one context, a secular interpretation is acceptable, in the other context a religious explanation is called for. The two classes “need not be intrinsically independent,” therefore it is possible to consider as related the explanations of hypostatic Christology (per Chalcedon) and perichoretic Trinitarianism (per Nicea). These latter concepts are dealt with in the chapter on the Trinity.

In respect of complementarity, Reich (1996a, p.158) admits that Bohr “popularized” the term, in his attempt to explain an aspect of quantum physics, “Hence the misleading notion that complementarity belongs to the realm of quantum physics.” Note therefore that:

- “In fact, many working physicists think that by now the quantum-mechanical formulation is entirely sufficient to deal with all possible tasks, and that the early crutch of complementarity is no longer needed.”
- “a case can be made for the prior (implicit) use of complementarity in theology.” (Reich refers to his own efforts to interpret the Trinity).

Then Reich says “In any case, the concept of complementarity seems to polarize people into advocates and opponents ... Might not other terms, which signify more or less the same, not be more felicitous, like (Bekker & Clark's) ‘double-aspect phenomenon’ ... or (Jackson's) ‘dependent concomitance’ ...?” (p.158). In **1996**, Oser & Reich (1996, p.385) announce that “our preferred label is now Relational and Contextual Reasoning,” and explain why the term complementarity was discarded:

Unfortunately, in the psychology of communication and in psychotherapy the meaning of that term is quite different. Also, in the course of our research it became clear that the central characteristics of the type of reasoning we are discussing are concerned with relationships (between theories A,B,C,... and the explanandum, and between the theories themselves) and with context dependencies (of the explanatory potential of the theories A,B,C. For instance, during a conversation or a game of chess, it is primarily the mind which characterizes human acting, whereas during dancing or skiing, it is the body).

The name change gives greater prominence to the role of context. Reich says he discovered he was dealing with “relationships” and “context dependencies” early on, and he was aware that physics had abandoned complementarity, as a “crutch.” *Reich's previous empirical work was based on the earlier understanding of complementarity, but context was always implied* in that, so “RCR” appears to be a more appropriate nomenclature. Oser & Reich (1996) provide a complicated outline of Relational and Contextual Reasoning, first explaining its two main components:

- Degrees of cognitive complexity - usually in terms of differentiation.
- Thinking in other logics than formal (binary) logic - as the formal is limited by “arithmetic,” Reich proposes a “trivalent” form.

Then the authors (p.387) explain that “... high-level RCR involves an understanding of the limited applicability of formal logic, and the concomitant insight into a possible context-dependency of the explanatory potential of partial aspects” and that high-level RCR thinking is “explicated in a differentiated and integrated manner.” This can be clarified as follows: From partial aspects of a problem (the little bits), we can learn a lot if the aspect is seen in a certain context. By altering the angle or

perspective, we can see other (unforseen) connections, and notice relationships. From these we can explain something better. At a macro level, two different items may have little or no obvious relationship. But at a micro level, interesting commonalities emerge, that might have practical significance.

The characteristics of CR remain embedded in RCR, although RCR seems to be less tied to the technical foundations of complementarity. The main super-structural features of RCR, relationality and contextuality, appear to function as means of identifying possible connections within and between concepts according to shifts in perspective. Thus the theory's usefulness and intelligibility is opened, encouraging its application to the resolution of apparent non-compatibilities. This development is clearly an improvement on CR, as the "how" of potential connectivity is now supplied. Complementarity in its earlier formulation took context into account in a limited way. Now a broader meaning could be attached to the term, although it suffers from some vagueness as Reich has not fully developed his explanation of that aspect of RCR. It is apparent that complementarity is not a "component" but remains a dimension of RCR.

2.11 Theory integration

Reich (1997c, p.107) presents some scholars' suggestions for theory integration, in a series of examples, but these examples are not inter-related until Reich (p.109) presents a unified model. The examples, by themselves, probably represent cases of intra-theory integration. It is obvious that most theories actually consist of defined terms and conjectural links between them, the resulting "integration" being reinforced (and disguised) by secondary layers of integration. One view (probably consistent with Reich's) is that the positive outcome of such constructions is that, for example, two theories can be linked "in terms of complementarity" by a process of decomposition or the breaking up of problems into manageable units (as explained by Bechtel and Richardson, *op.cit.*) so that, at intermediate levels, considerable scope exists for useful integration. In fact, Reich (1997c) provides nine theoretical sets to illustrate how integration is possible. The various groups of theories presented appear to be:

- illustrative of how various theory domains consist of diverse elements regarding which some attempt at integration is made, and

- an implicit attempt to draw connections between these theory domains, in order to explicitly unify them into a general theory.

The principles for attempting the implicit attempt (above) are then specified (and drawn from Kuhn, 1988; Reich, 1992a; see also Paloutzian, 1996, p.112).

The following description of how a unified theory would work (drawn from Reich, 1997c, pp.109-113) represents how Reich's general heuristic opens up many possibilities for applying RCR, and is germane to the consideration of the WCG's transformation. Although the options are broad and eclectic, they lend themselves to some integration within a holistic framework. The categories offer deeper understanding of Reich's approach and prospective guidance for further research.

Such categories of RCR's heuristic in action:

- (1) "refer to *psychical* (intellectual, emotional, volitional, preconscious, unconscious) *processes* that take place within the organism, including those aspects of such processes referred to as meaning-making"; these aspects may be dealt with in depth psychology, semantic analysis and communicative intention and, theologically, in terms of the emergence of a "mind of Christ" consistent with conversion (Dykstra & Parks, 1986; Fowler, 2000; Peace, 1999; Smith, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 1985).
- (2) "characterize development as a *gradual coordination* of individual psyche and biophysical, sociocultural, and perceived spiritual reality and explicate the relationship between the *internal* and the *external forces* in the course of development"; these dimensions incorporate socially-responsible character formation, that emerges from a period of spiritual discipline (Torrance, 1992; Willard, 1991).
- (3) "address the *social contexts* in which development occurs and the ways in which those contexts relate to individual religious attitudes, behaviour, and development;" this requirement relates to everyday life, the so-called secular sphere (Banks, 1987), and also involves communal relationships between

believers (Bonhoeffer, 1954). In this sense, reality not only is seen in a different way; it is thought about and applied as a worldview among other worldviews.

- (4) “account for the *universal features* of religious development as well as for individual differences”; therefore take into account diverse anthropological and cultural contributions (Marty, 2005; Mol, 1983; Newbiggin, 1986; Norman, 1979; Otto, 1950; Tillich, 1959). This universalizing feature of a unified theory also allows for trans-confessional communication, and the affirmation of a common humanity capable of shared understandings – the acceptance of differences instead of mass conformity.
- (5) “specify *mechanisms* by means of which developmental change occurs and explain the workings of factors that favour or hinder religious development, including conversion and apostasy” (Bromley, 1988; Gillespie, 1991; Jacobs, 1989; Percy, 2000; Rambo, 1993).

2.12 Stimulation of RCR

RCR remains a descriptive term unless it can be used to stimulate and direct growth in understanding of complex matters, as well to assist in the holding of different views on a subject without a loss of cognitive balance. In the midst of a report on empirical studies, the question is asked: “Can the development toward higher stages be stimulated?” (Oser & Reich, 1996, p.378). In effect, those who were involved in religious dilemma discussions over a period of time did show progress. On p.379 the authors refer to Kohlberg's statement that development is “a change toward greater differentiation, integration, and adaptation.” Nevertheless, the authors (p.380) conclude that Religious Judgment and Kohlberg's Moral Stages are the result of different “mother-structures” (sic), therefore are independent, “irrespective of their possible mutual developmental stimulation.” It would be inappropriate, then, to assume that people ascend in Religious Judgment at a corresponding rate in terms of Morality, as defined by Kohlberg, but it is possible that the construct “morality” is implied in the Religious Judgment stages. The RJ characteristics (table on p.372) do not include explicitly moral values, but “individual responsibility” is assumed and “universal solidarity” (that is, social responsibility) is presented as an ideal outcome.

Reich (1996b, p.136) considers how RCR can be stimulated (assuming that it has moral/ethical value). Following the RCR schema, it appears that the educator can:

- at Level 1 “draw attention to neglected aspects”,
- at Level 2 give “exercises in differentiation”,
- at Level 3 offer studies in the limitations of classical logic,
- at Level 4 facilitate exercises in integration of different aspects of knowledge,
- and at Level 5 the student receives affirmation from the teacher.

Reich (1996b, p.137) admits that RCR cannot solve problems completely, but:

- “RCR admits that particular aspects need not be present simultaneously, but - depending on the context - may appear successively (such as the particle-like and the wavelike behaviour of light).”
- “RCR admits that in certain cases a causal explanation involving God's action needs to be kept separate from a personal and historical description of what happened (just as in quantum physics the space time description has to be kept separate from a consideration of the energy balance). God's action cannot be merged point-by-point with a diachronic event description into a unified picture.”

Is RCR useful in religious education? Reich (1996b) promotes RCR as an established, given theory, based on his previous work on complementarity. The claims for RCR are now “confident” - that is, it has “demonstrated” its ability to “facilitate” understanding of Chalcedon, the Trinity, and similar complexities. This confidence leads Reich (pp.129-130) to state that RCR is “self-explanatory.” It is about discovering relationships “and any context-dependency of the aspects considered.” It is also “post-Piagetian thought,” in that it “matures” (if at all) later in the developmental sequence. But what is meant by maturation, in this quality? Is it possible to think in terms of complementarity (that is, to use RCR – and here it must be noted that there could be a confusion between RCR being a defining criterion – what it is - and operating as an instrumentality – how it is) at earlier stages? That there is range of questions about

maturation is not surprising and Reich (p.135) himself asks “How new is all this? Clearly, it has been known since antiquity that reasoning can take various forms.”

Reich (1996b, p.142) gives class room examples of RCR being present in various problem cases. He admits that these results are “somewhat anecdotal” and earlier laboratory studies gave better results. Reich quotes his earlier works as evidence to support current statements and introduces supportive new material from other sources. This supports Reich’s overall purpose, and any attempt at a unified theory (that also is pluralistic, derivative and eclectic) will be inherently paradoxical. Reich (1997c) has a passion for integrating differing theories – he notes the diversity of psychologies dealing with religion and the difficulty of studying religiously-oriented psychology from a single perspective.

What are Reich’s perspectives on the psychology of religious development? In Oser and Reich (1996), we are given a general definition of psychology - concerned with “the subjective” and that allows for different concepts and methods, making it possible for the authors to deal with the “psychological” according to their interests in ways of thinking. A broader approach is deemed necessary because people nowadays have a largely eclectic, personal belief system, drawing from sources beyond (and apart from) established religion. This requires the coordination of religious and nonreligious worldviews (Oser & Reich, 1996, p.382), which is approached from the perspective of complementarity, because “As a result of a ten-year study ..., we believe we have established the existence of a specific form of reasoning used for the description or explanation of a particular phenomenon in terms of at least two 'competing' theories.” (p.384).

Reich appears to concede that complementarity can be a sub-classification of Aristotelian logic. Note that “both dialectical logic and the logic of complementarity assume that the elements to which the logic is to be applied belong to at least two distinct categories” (Reich, 1996a, p.154). That is, one type of logic is applied to elements that share two categories. Dialectics does it one way; complementarity another way, but classical logic cannot do it at all. Now for an element to share two categories, there is a need for “class-set logic” (Venn diagrams). Reich deals with this approvingly. Thus (p.156) the Ten Commandments could be seen as equally applicable to “social

values (that) serve species-preserving behavior described by biologists.” This observation confirms the value of RCR for considering multiple explanations in any area but is peculiarly suited to the interpretation of religious issues. Inter-faith or denominational differences could be “unfrozen” by considering the overlap of beliefs and common structural properties, but understanding can also be enhanced by recognizing the multiplicity of valid positions on some topic without having to abandon one’s own distinctive belief. Yet, in the case of the WCG transformation, it will be seen that as the Trinity, Christian identity and salvation are intertwined, acceptance of the Trinity doctrine was necessary for a full transformation to take place.

2.13 Evaluative summary

Reich’s first major book, *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Reich, 2002b), draws together much of the preceding reflections which need not be reiterated here. The author admits that he has written in a style that demonstrates, and facilitates, relational and contextual reasoning, and this does make it a challenge to read. Of immediate importance to the present thesis is the identification of a methodological approach that will assist in a more defined analysis and appraisal of Reich’s work, as well as being useful for the study of the WCG’s leaders’ transformation – especially in relation to their adoption of the Trinity.

In a Symposium on Reich’s book in *Zygon*, Albright (2003, p.436) situates Reich’s project in anti-dualism (which may be identified in the critical-realist work of Bhaskar, 2002). Reich is said to offer an alternative logical scheme that does not force a choice between positions. The RCR approach also goes beyond the quantitative “fuzzy logic” advanced in recent times, ultimately seeking insights into phenomena with competing explanations – or with no “scientific” explanation at all. Albright (p.438) reminds us that “Piaget specifically excluded religion from his form of logic on the grounds that religion is not logical.” Of Reich, Albright (p.439) says: “He has laid the foundation for a whole new intellectual industry.” Such an enterprise is said to be “empirically rooted” (Teske, 2003, p.442), thus giving Reich’s theory much more substance and prospect in psychological research. Yet it has the freedom to flit between deterministic positions, which by their structural rigidity can never arrive at a satisfactory resolution of multiple perspectives (the attempt to converge towards

singularities being a false solution). Teske (p.443) says that “it is clear that RCR does provide a system within which ... equivocalities and multivocalities can be framed and their dependencies more systematically understood.” Teske (p.444) says:

... one of the strengths of Reich’s theory is that it is not simply restricted to alternate causal theories but also encompasses a range of relationships between the theories themselves, differentiated, integrated, connected as parts to wholes, along a potential hierarchy ranging from elements to conjunctions, to composites, and even to complete thought forms, as well as allowing for iterations between levels.

These evaluations appear to have increased Reich’s confidence in his thinking that has developed over the past fifteen years (Reich, 2003a), considered to have a stable theoretical grounding, notwithstanding the preliminary nature of the research. Yet (p.461) he is able to say “I wonder a little now whether it does not overemphasize RCR with respect to other thought forms ...” because it is evident that many people satisfactorily use a number of forms of reasoning, often unthinkingly. “RCR is in no way a license for a relativistic or post-modern ‘anything goes’” (p.462). Reich (p.464) sees his work “as a potential contribution to the development of modernist epistemology through the introduction of differing thought forms involving different logics matched to the problem at hand,” possibly leading to a “transmodern epistemology”.

Reich’s theory of relational and contextual reasoning, as introduced in this chapter, has emerged as more than an appropriate contribution to resolving difficulties in understanding paradoxical beliefs – it holds the promise of stimulating interest in these beliefs for their intrinsic worth and for their integration into broader belief systems (see criteria for good research, in Littlejohn, 1999). RCR’s usefulness in understanding and explaining complex Christian doctrines will be demonstrated in the following chapter and later in an assessment of the cognitive transformation of WCG leaders. To conclude, Chapter 7 will present an appraisal of Reich’s theory and approach.

CHAPTER 3

Relational and Contextual Reasoning related to Christology and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity

3.1 Application of RCR to theology

The intent of the present thesis is to examine the psychological transformation of Worldwide Church of God (WCG) leaders, in terms of the structure of their reasoning. These structural aspects are related to the complex belief adopted by the WCG, that is, the Trinity, and also the Christian doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Not only are these difficult ideas a “test case” for Relational and Contextual Reasoning (RCR), they also can be used as a test case for the transformation of the WCG, which coincidentally centrally involves these same doctrines. This enters the field of historical theology and matters that otherwise would receive a theological treatment must here be examined in terms of Reich’s theory of RCR. What follows is not an exhaustive appraisal of dogma, but an early attempt to connect an article of orthodox Christian belief with psychological processes intrinsic to the cognitive conversion of WCG leaders, with more to follow in the chapters on the WCG literature and responses.

Although Reich does not figure in the academic discussion on Trinitarian theology, aspects of his theory may be traced in the mushrooming interest in this area. Apart from the earlier connection between complementarity and Christian beliefs in Reich, McKay and others (Chapter 2), scientific analogies have been presented by theological writers (Erickson, 1993; Letham, 2004; Loder & Neidhardt, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1998; Torrance, 2002) drawing on the light/wave distinction. Although Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) sought to clarify the dynamic rationality inherent in Christian doctrines, particularly the Trinity (Leithart, 2004; Midmore, 2002), the scientific aspects of this have been raised by others since.

Referring to Gregory of Nazianzen (Fourth Century Cappadocian Father), Letham (2004, p.379) notes Gregory’s “strikingly modern” hermeneutic, in that in his exposition on the Trinity he oscillates between Three in One in a way that corresponds

to the wave-particle duality of light and also to gestalt psychology. Letham refers to Loder and Neidhardt's (1992) work, discussed below, about the breaking down of classical logic in extreme situations. Therefore, according to Letham (2004, p.380):

Logical deductions from premises are good within certain parameters, but, if absolutized, can prevent us from knowing. In theology, this means we must faithfully submit ourselves to God's revelation and allow thoughts to proceed on the basis of who he discloses himself to be.

Regardless of the theological imperative stated here, Letham's treatment of the topic accords well with the Reichian approach not only because it draws on similar notions from physics but because it advocates openness to multiple explanations. Within this purview, a spiritual dimension in understanding the Trinity (and, the conversion of the WCG leaders) is not entirely ruled out.

3.2 RCR and the Two Natures of Christ

Christian theology requires Jesus to be both God and man, and this is a fundamental prerequisite for a formulation of the Trinity, and it is a necessary belief for the WCG to hold to legitimize its adoption of the Trinity doctrine. Christ's dual nature, however, is not within a "modalistic" framework. Modalism, in order to avoid tritheism, thought of a unitary God as operating in various modes (qua Father, qua Son, or qua Holy Spirit). It reduced God to a singularity, without internal relationships (Elwell, 1984, p.27; Grudem, 1994, p.242; McGrath, 1997, p.301). Although complementarity theory deals with "modes," this does not appear to be a handicap in applying the theory to the two natures of Christ, even though this approach has been criticized by Austin (1967). But the use of complementarity to explain puzzling discoveries is useful at a communicative level (Kaiser, 1976, p.39). This view of Christ being God and man (inexplicable as it is) must be explained using classical language, to augment the implicit and inexpressible language of this thought, but these two explanations have a common theological reference in Christ portrayed as both "real man" and "true God" (p.41). Modality, here understood as a manner of speaking, is not to be confused with separation of being (Torrance, 1988, 1994).

The knowledge of God poses profound philosophical problems, and the place of logic in this is unclear (Adler, 1980). The present study is not intended to appraise the various theistic proofs, from a logical standpoint, but the type of reasoning used to explain an account of God's assumed triune nature (in the Christian tradition) is the primary concern. The reasoning processes in respect of the Chalcedonian Formula and the Doctrine of the Trinity probably are similar, in that they deal with paradox and enigma, in relation to the belief in the dual-nature of Christ and the relationship of Christ to the Godhead. Yet for centuries apologists for these doctrines have sought to render them intelligible to believers and unbelievers alike.

The Council of Chalcedon (451) stated a formula about the two natures of Christ, which read in part (Lane, 1992, p.51):

... Jesus Christ, is perfect in Godhood and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man ... He is of one substance [homoousios] with the Father as God, he is also of one substance [homoousios] with us as man Made known in two natures [which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The distinction of the natures is in no way taken away by their union, but rather the distinctive properties of each nature are preserved. [Both natures] unite into one person and one hypostasis. They are not separated or divided into two persons but [they form] one and the same Son ...

Amongst English translations, the expression of the doctrine varies a little although the substantive definition remains constant. For example, compare Bettenson's (1967, p.51) version, here quoted in part, with the above.

... Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man ... of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood recognized in two natures, without confusion ... without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son ...

The above versions present an identical message, both employing complementarity-type thinking according to Reich's assessment, yet this is conveyed in a slightly different form of words. This variety of expression, as long as it is consistent with the intended meaning of the statement, shows that individualistic uses of language about a common topic should not preclude similar assessments of the type of reasoning employed.

3.3 Trinitarian perspectives

An extension of the above formula, linking the "Father" and the "Son" of the Godhead, includes the Holy Spirit. A definition of this tri-une God is stated in the so-called Athanasian Creed (5th century), which can be found in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and Grudem (1994, p.1170). It states, in part:

... we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Spirit [and we] acknowledge that every Person by himself to be God and Lord: so we are forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There be three Gods ...

According to church historian Chadwick (1967, p.203), "the formula was a mosaic of phrases from different sources." The complementarity aspect of this "paradox" is addressed by Erickson (1993, p.105), here quoted to show how theologians draw on science to explain their interpretations.

Physicists have never finally and perfectly resolved the question of the nature of light. One theory says that it is waves. The other says it is quant {sic}, little bundles of energy as it were. Logically it cannot be both. Yet to account for all the data, one must hold both theories simultaneously.

The use of different words to communicate the same proposition was noted above, but the underlying logic needs to be scrutinized. Reich's theory relies on there being a "complementarity" foundation for the doctrines, yet Chadwick (1967, p.207) claims that both pro- and anti-Chalcedonian parties "employed the rigorous rules of Aristotelian logic." It seems that Chadwick is referring to "the argument from authority," related to

selective compilations of traditional texts from which conclusions were drawn. Thus the “logic” is a rhetorical device, which allows at least (Reich, 1990a, p.148) “the linking of explanations that might previously have been considered independent or even irrelevant before (circular complementarity).” The above selection of quotes concerning the Trinity have a common reference and may be understood as “complementing” each other, resulting in a “fuller” understanding (this is not classical complementarity). This combinative approach reduces the Godhead to a unified principle, and withdraws from the Godhead the capacity to remain viable as a “Trinity.” In other words, RCR is not intended to be employed as means of extinguishing “cognitive dissonance” (if that term can be used to refer to the experience of paradoxical doctrines) but as a means of *retaining* the innate ambiguity of the concept.

Even though McGrath (1987, p.98) asserts that God and humanity occupy a “common logical world,” and the Trinity is increasingly becoming a topic of philosophical interest (Brummer, 2005), we are told “Don’t be surprised if you find this concept [that is, the Trinity] mysterious. It is perfectly logical that the very essence of God’s being would exceed our full capacity to understand!” (Hayford, 2003, p.9). According to Lorenzen (1999, p.1), “In Western Christianity at the present time the doctrine of the Trinity is truly an enigma.” She argues that:

The doctrine of the Trinity has become divorced from the doctrine of salvation, soteriology; from the doctrine of the church, ecclesiology; and from how Christians understand what it means for Jesus to be Christ, Christology. Strangest of all is that this doctrine has been separated from the Christian understanding of God.

The above appears to reflect the ordinary believer’s grasp of the topic. To be fair, the ordinary WCG member should not be judged at a higher standard in respect of their understanding of the doctrine, especially since it is relatively new to them. However, more will be expected of the WCG leadership and those who teach for or against the doctrine.

The WCG came to an acceptance of the Trinity after it had abandoned its “God Family” agenda and had removed obstacles and objections to the doctrine, albeit against

strong opposition from many of its ministers and members, so that the adoption of the Trinity seemed less a result of logical reasoning than a matter of expediency. In so doing, the original context of the doctrine's formulation seems to have been missed. Lorenzen (1999, p.4) refers to the early Eastern orthodox view of salvation being inherent in the Trinity, so that the indwelling of God's Spirit (qua the triune God) involved a

gradual process of personally becoming God by grace making it possible for all baptized people to achieve *theosis* (deification), that is, to become God by grace and in that process bring about the salvation of the world.

Ironically, it was the abandoning of the Armstrong "You can become God" agenda that paved the way for the WCG to accept the Trinity, without the cognizance that inherent in the early (albeit Eastern) tradition of the Trinity was the promise that Christians would become God (how is not made clear). It is possible that such an introduction to the premises of the Trinity doctrine would have enabled the WCG to retain its general plan of salvation, with suitable modifications to its literalist "begettal" analogies, whilst gaining admittance to orthodoxy. Ironically, on the double procession (*filioque*) issue [note – the doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and from the Son], the WCG via its Greek expert, Dr. Stavrinides, leaned to an Eastern Christian perspective, apparently unaware that this gave humanity promise of eventual full participation in the "energy of God" and so to become "deified" (St. John in the Wilderness, 2004, p.4).

Evidently the very context of the Trinity doctrine's original admittance to Christian orthodoxy involved questions about salvation, and how that was dependent on the divine status of the man Jesus. At this early stage (Lorenzen, 1999, pp.3, 11) the question of a Christian's works and merit were taken into account, as evidence of their participation in the transfiguration of what was earthly into the divine. This was more pronounced in Arianism [a teaching that placed the Son below the Father], and also Pelagianism [a teaching that favoured human autonomy], giving rise to a tradition that salvation was dependent on the imitation of Christ. The WCG shared in this tradition in that it had inherited a semi-Arian Christology, and arose in a climate of Wesleyan holiness expectations which, together with a number of peculiar Israelite beliefs,

exposed the WCG to charges of being a sub-Christian and works-oriented religion (now dubbed the “Old Covenant” phase; Albrecht, 2004).

Lorenzen (1999, p.12) states that “the Trinity begins with the salvation of the world as its goal and attempts to explain how God is related to the world so as to make this salvation described in terms of participation possible.” Thus the Christian’s identity and future is drawn into the Godhead, and the means for this involved accepting the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Lorenzen (p.21) writes:

The development of the divinity of the Holy Spirit was necessary because it is only by means of the Holy Spirit that one has the grace necessary to have faith in Christ as the Son We who are created in the image of God are able to realize this image by participation in God in the person (*hypostasis*) of the Holy Spirit. Thus this whole Trinity understood in this way is necessary for humans to become God by grace.

An alternative modern view, by Cyril Richardson, is that the Holy Spirit is unnecessary as a person in the Trinity. Richardson’s point is that “the chief problem with the Western tradition is that it continues inauthentically to affirm the doctrine of the Trinity when its theology can only support two aspects and so is binitarian” (Lorenzen, 1999, p.49). Richardson “considers the Trinity to be an artificial construct that confuses paradoxes and contradictions in God” (p.52). As Letham (2004, p.55) argues, Richardson would only be partly correct. Letham argues that the early binitarian position was directly related to the prominence given to Christ although the Holy Spirit played an inconspicuous role until the church’s “consciousness” of the Spirit’s personal affinity with the Father and Son made it impossible to refuse a Trinitarian position. This was only vaguely formulated in the early New Testament church. Richardson’s truncated position is similar to that taken by many anti-Trinitarians (for example, former WCG clergy and the Church of God, Seventh Day). Having resolved the divinity of Jesus to their satisfaction, and a “two member” version of the Trinity formulation, and accepted the Augustinian view that the role of the Spirit is the love or link between the Father and Son, such an earlier WCG position could have met some of the criteria for orthodoxy if it truly had a defensible program for salvation that relied entirely on the sufficiency of Christ. Indeed, that appears to be the current position of the WCG’s

“parent”, the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day), which has shifted from its original Arian position to embrace Christ as fully God and Saviour (Stacy, 2004, p.3). This has been discussed with leaders of that church on several visits to their offices in Denver, Colorado.

Returning to the application of RCR to understanding the Trinity, Reich’s standard of an “intellectually acceptable understanding” does not necessarily relate to the ability to explain the doctrine in conformity with historic orthodox language. That is, rather than a thoughtless reiteration of a formula, what is expected is an awareness of the inherent difficulties of the belief together with a grasp of possible connections between non-compatible elements, ideally expressed with clarity. The need for specific prior knowledge is also relevant. Beliefs that humans can become gods, and triadic divinities, abound throughout many cultures, but the idea that someone can be both God and Man simultaneously – and also part of a threesome that is also One – is distinctly Christian.

Such matters require some kind of pre-understanding, so that the belief can be intelligible enough for an attempt at explanation to be made (Howe, 2003). However, incomplete knowledge and presuppositions can hinder this task. That certainly is applicable to the WCG for, not only did the WCG admit that it had an inadequate understanding of the historic doctrines, it also was suspicious of mainstream Christian beliefs. That is, the WCG’s worldview was prejudicial to any development of its understanding of these doctrines and its interest in them was only negative until the question of the WCG’s identity as a Christian church became salient.

Mainstream theologians assert that the doctrines of the dual nature of Christ and the Trinity are grounded in early church history and were not formally enshrined in creeds until much later (McGrath, 1997). The central concern of the early Church was to maintain its Monotheism at the same time as its belief that Jesus is God but not the Father. In the context of considering Heim’s pluralistic theology, Kärkkäinen (2004, p.146) has this to say:

With regard to biblical considerations, the faithfulness to the Bible of any Trinitarian theology can only be evaluated in light of later theological

developments, since the Bible does not yet have a doctrine of the Trinity. So we have to ask, does interpretation of the Trinity coincide with the (early postbiblical) Christian reading of biblical salvation history that resulted in the doctrine of the Trinity? The main impetus for the rise of the doctrine of the Trinity in early Christian theology was to secure the closest possible union between Yahweh of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ. This was necessitated by the uncompromising monotheism of Judaism, on which incipient Christian faith built and insisted that the Father of Jesus Christ is the Yahweh of the Jewish faith. The Trinity was also needed to hold simultaneously to two premises, perceived as contradictory to other monotheisms, namely, the transcendence of God and the historical particularity of the incarnated Son as the very revelation of God. So the original purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity was not so much to affirm diversity in God as it was, in light of the incarnation and giving of the Spirit, to affirm belief in one God.

Once the WCG realized that an explanation, similar to the above, was not inimical to its theological intent, its pre-understanding of the Trinity could have changed sufficiently for it to consider a place for the Trinity doctrine in its belief system. As will be discussed later in this chapter, it is not clear if the WCG benefited from cogent arguments in favour of the Trinity during the early stage of its changes under Armstrong's successor. The WCG had long held that the Trinity doctrine was extra-biblical and owed its existence to philosophical ideas. The orthodox belief about the Trinity came to be expressed in philosophical language, but the formula held together the "primitive" beliefs of the dual nature of Christ and the inter-relationships of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Both involve a high level of RCR, according to Reich, and both are required for a fully developed Christology (Reich 1989b, 1990a).

The God-man nexus also served to tie in the believer's experience of God, thus fulfilling the Christian's identity as a partaker in this divine mystery. In short, these doctrines were not developed apart from the believer's experience and were intrinsic to the formulation of the church. Presumably that is why it came to be believed that belief in the Trinity was necessary for membership in the Christian church and for salvation – line 28 of the Athanasian Creed warns, "He therefore that will be saved, must thus think

of the Trinity” (Grudem, 1994, p.1170). For mainstream Christians this is a serious matter and orthodoxy in belief is essential to their hope for salvation.

3.4 Loder’s perspective

The late Dr. James Loder (1931-2000), of Princeton Theological Seminary, provides a compelling account of Trinitarian logic. It is included here because Loder was John McKenna’s teacher at Fuller Theological Seminary, whilst McKenna was a minister in the American Baptist Church. McKenna as the WCG’s theological adviser during the main period of theological transition, was in a position to introduce the WCG to a sophisticated perspective on the Trinity although, as will be noted later in the present thesis, there is little evidence of this having occurred.

Loder and Neidhardt (1992, p.82), reflecting on God in Kierkegaardian terms, suggest that “the logic of the incarnation is rooted in the logic of complementarity” and say in regard to Nicene-Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451) that “these credal formulations were carefully constructed to communicate accurately a non-objectifiable reality as objectively as possible. They were not intended to be metaphysical statements” (Loder & Neidhardt, 1992, p.84). The argument goes that Christian identity was procured via the Trinity doctrine. It will become apparent, however, that the WCG’s adoption of the Trinity doctrine was not in the context of a renewed interest in the doctrine for its own sake, such as its resurgence in contemporary theology, but rather as a “happenstance” in the context of a review of several WCG beliefs

How could an authentic transformation (following the above argument) come about? Loder’s theme seems to be that a “leap of faith” is involved (as in chess, there is a “knight’s move”). Note, however, that Loder’s leap of faith refers to the bridge between ways that the “strange loop” (Moebius band) expresses related ideas. How this can be connected with RCR is made clear in the notion of “leap,” which implies some discontinuity. That is, there is no smooth transition between levels. Loder (1998, p.13), in referring to the Moebius Band (like a rubber twisted in a figure 8), says something that complements Reich’s RCR theme:

What the metaphor of the Moebius Band should convey is that to speak of a unity is not a retreat into “substance” or “being,” but the unity is precisely the relationality between the two apparently opposed or contradictory polarities or viewpoints.

This is useful in the Trinitarian debates because it bypasses issues of “substance” and “being” and focuses on “relations.” Loder (1998, p.195) refers to “the perichoretic relationality in the inner life of God”:

The Latin church fathers translated this as *circumincessio*, meaning that there is a moving around within the Trinity such that among the persons there is a mutual interpenetration at all points without any loss of identity. Individuality and mutuality are simultaneously affirmed, and the members of the Trinity can exchange places or mutually indwell one another without changing their identity. Thus, the unity of the Trinity *is* the relationality, and the relationality is the unity. Further, each one implies all three, yet the distinction of each from the others is not lost.

Much of the anti-Trinitarian argument, as will be seen, reacts against the assumed tangibility of psychological persons in the Godhead. This is unnecessary in a purely Triune configuration, but understandable in coming to terms with the God-man nexus. If, however, both formulations have similar relationality and can be explained by similar logic, then objections to the Trinity idea could be reconsidered. Loder (1998, pp.13-14) suggests:

Such a bipolar relational unity, although paradoxical, is not unfamiliar in experience or a strange form of explanation. It appears in epistemology as the inevitable duality of the I-me relationship, which is always experienced as a unity of the self. In physics, it appears in quantum theory as the concept of complementarity constructed by Niels Bohr to explain the bipolar relationality between wave and particle in the nature of light. It appears definitely in the church’s definition of the person of Jesus Christ formulated at the ecumenical council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

Loder (1998) also implies that identity in this configuration is not necessarily the same as equality. This opens up the possibility of a less strident approach to questions of position or function in the Godhead, such as applies to the idea of subordination.

Loder (p.14) says:

It should also be clear that the duality is not a relationality among equals. It is, rather, the case that the asymmetry in the duality gives consistent ontological priority to one side over the other within the dynamic of the relationality

In the Chalcedonian formulation, the divine maintains priority over the human.

This introduces the idea that comprehension of the divine (in this case, understanding of the Trinity doctrine) is not attained through ascending a scale (such as towards a higher level of RCR). The process is reversed in that the mere acceptance of the idea (for whatever reason, intellectual or otherwise) would lead to understanding. Loder (p.32) refers to T.F. Torrance's argument "that natural theology, the study of the natural order as a way to understand God independent of the positive theology of revelation in Jesus Christ, is like pre-Einsteinian understanding of geometry in relation to physics." Therefore (p.32), "The natural order is not the context in which to understand God, but the natural order itself must be understood in the context of what God has revealed."

Contrary to developmental ideas inherent in Reich (as well as Fowler, et. al.), the above perspective suggests that the Trinity is not to be formulated according to principles of logic. Rather, the Trinity reveals a kind of logic that draws people into an appreciation of its relationality, even though that remains mysterious. The implication is that (for some, at least) understanding the Trinity follows acceptance of it. This raises the possibility that RCR thinking, in some cases at least, follows acceptance of a belief – a belief which requires a certain kind of thinking for its comprehension post-acceptance.

Is there really such a dichotomy between the classical and "complementarity" way of reasoning? Reich (1995d, p.391) perseveres in considering the possibility of relating doctrine and science, using the Trinity as a model. The Trinitarian *perichoresis* is at the heart of the discourse. The meaning of the word "becomes clear from its two Latin translations. *Circumcessio* {note "c"} ... to move around, and refers to the

dynamic part of *perichoresis*. *Circumsessio* {note "s"} ... sitting around, refers to the static part." According to Reich, it is non-Aristotelean and a type of metalogical reasoning. To grasp what Reich is arguing requires a penetration of his use of different types of logic. Some of Reich's ideas require the reader to move around the idea from within, whilst maintaining the integrity of the concept. These ideas are further elucidated in the work of Bernard Lonergan S.J. (Farrell & Soukup, 1993; Lonergan, 1958; McShane, 1973). Thus the necessity of thinking in terms of complementarity (or RCR) is supported by the characteristics of this kind of reasoning and such relevant complexities as the Trinity.

This kind of reasoning is high on Reich's RCR scale and deals with the complex ideas much more satisfactorily than many of the anti-Trinitarian arguments presented below. Critics of the Trinity doctrine use the presence of apparent contradiction as a basis for rejecting the doctrine, rather than entering into the dynamics of that "contradiction" as paradox that could be understood in context. Thus their rejection of the Trinity doctrine may be linked, *ipso facto*, to the lack of RCR in their thinking. Such critics never arrive at statements such as Loder (1998, p.195) presents:

That God *is* Spirit (John 4) and that the Spirit is also one member *of* the Trinity (John 17, Eph. 2:18, 4:4-6) is not an internal contradiction. The potential confusion is resolved if it is recognized that it is inherent in the nature of the Spirit to be relational and at the same time in relation to relate to itself. That is, God both *is* Spirit and *has* Spirit.

3.5 RCR as unity in diversity

Reich (1990a) appears to be (partly) motivated by the desire to ameliorate pain resulting from conflicting beliefs, not the mere resolution of doctrinal paradoxes. To some extent, the Christian tradition (re Chalcedon) serves as a model for an eirenic (reconciliatory) approach to conflict. Complementarity thinking is credited with a major role in this, but such thinking is admitted to be a type of "pragmatic reasoning schema, that is, a generalized set of rules defined in relation to a particular class of goals" (p.149). If the goal was to reach consensus, for its own sake or to serve the attainment of a standard of orthodoxy that could become an instrument of enforcing orthodoxy, the

intrinsic problem of the mystery of Christ and the Godhead becomes a secondary issue. The irony in this eirenic agenda is that the “truth” is covered up for the sake of unity and uniformity. The formula of the doctrine becomes more important than its inherent relationality, that (theologically, at least) should bring about harmony between different perspectives.

To get a glimpse into what was in the minds of those responsible for the Chalcedonian Definition, Reich (1990a, p.152) relies on historical sources. He claims that although the “unity of style” of the Definition might be traced to a single author, there is evidence of other hands in certain interpolations. The Definition was promulgated in 451, but its text owed its existence to a “Formulary of Reunion” drafted in 433. According to Chadwick (1967, p.204) “The formula was a mosaic of phrases from different sources.” In 433, opposing theologians had appealed to Emperor Theodosius II, sitting at Chalcedon, who “ratified the rival depositions ... as if they had been the acts of a united council” (Chadwick 1967:198). The Council of Chalcedon (451) basically amalgamated the Formulary of 433, plus Cyril of Alexandria's second letter to Nestorius (430), and Pope Leo's “Tome” (sent to the Council of Ephesus, 449).

Regardless of how the final document was redacted, it is evident that it drew upon several other documents each of which was not deemed completely adequate for a comprehensive statement that would stand the test of time. Thus the process involved the reconciliation of statements regarding belief about Christ as much as an attempt to deal with the phenomenon of the dual nature of Christ.

Reich (1989b, p.i) admits that the Chalcedonian Definition does appear to be “logically paradoxical,” if judged by “classical logic.” He proposes a “trivalent” logic which admits the category “non-compatible.” Thus different aspects of an idea/object can be “predominantly manifest” in different situations, without excluding the other aspects. Reich also deals with “hidden assumptions” (p.9) of classical (Aristotelian) propositional logic (including syllogisms) that are also implied in Piagetian formal operations, but not necessarily in complementarity. Reich implies that this gives the latter an advantage. Instances of logical arguments are used to assert that whilst the formal logic may be correct, the conclusions do not correspond with reality. Reich also points out that, in quantum physics, three values exist (true, false, indeterminate). He

suggests inadequacies in the classical form of logic, and recommends that the choice of logic be pertinent to the system.

Reich (1989b) also argues that different “situational manifestations” of an entity can be explained by taking into account semantic shifts. Thus even Aristotelian logic is regarded as a mental construct, not immutable law. Reich suggests that a problem's *structure* permits different kinds of complementarity thinking: *parallel* complementarity involves the coordination of conflicting explanations; *circular* complementarity involves the catenation (linking) of independent explanations.

3.6 Kaiser's heuristic for the “two natures”

Reich (1989b) draws on Kaiser's (1976) analysis of the ontology of the Chalcedonian Definition to confirm its logical acceptability. Kaiser (1976, pp.43-47) uses Bohr's formulation of complementarity to outline connections with the dual understanding of Christ. Reich relies on Kaiser's outline to demonstrate the need for assembling a number of categories and features of a problem, which on the surface may appear unrelated or incoherent, so that an appropriate strategy for addressing the totality can be considered. In fact, this is consistent with Reich's heuristic (see Chapter 4) that leads to the application of RCR. Kaiser's categories are summarized as follows:

- (1) *Unity of being* – The modes (“natures”?) of God and man pertain to one and the same person.
- (2) *Common properties* – The two modes share “life” and “personality.”
- (3) *Individual completeness* – Christ is “perfect God” and “perfect man.”
- (4) *Coexhaustiveness* – The two modes are sufficient as they are.
- (5) *Equal necessity* – Both modes of God and man are needed to fully explain Christ.
- (6) *Reciprocity* – The two modes are dynamically related to each other: Christ as God is continually “inhominated” and Christ as man is continually “deified.”
- (7) *Interchange of attributes and coinherence* – Some may “attribute divine activities and properties to the ‘flesh’ of Jesus and characteristically human ones to the divine Word.”

- (8) *Mutual exclusiveness* – “The two modes coexist and coinhere, but they retain their distinctness and are not to be confused or ‘mixed’ in any manner.”
- (9) *Conjugate properties* – Each mode has its own characteristics: Christ as God is invisible, ubiquitous, whereas Christ as man is capable of visibility, confinement.
- (10) *Asymmetry and emergence* – “the mode of ‘divinity’ in Christ accounts for the transcendental qualities of his life in a way that human categories, alone, cannot.”
- (11) *Pointing* – “with Christ, there is no way to demonstrate the divine presence from his human activities, yet the believer, at least, is able to ‘intuit’ this presence in special moments of ‘revelation’ ... The humanity ‘points to’ or ‘reveals’ the divine presence.”

The above collection follows Reich’s heuristics, to be outlined in the Methodology chapter, in that it elaborates each category in relation to the whole, as well as relating the categories to each other. As such they “complement” each other, but this is not what is meant by the term complementarity. The latter term involves the acceptance of non-compatibles as valid contributions to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and, in the case of Christ, is wholly suitable as a method and not just a description. Although Kaiser’s categories describe how various elements “complement” one another, it is within the elements themselves that paradox needs to be understood, in a “complementarity” way. It is important to appreciate the different uses of the word, as the attempt to understand the Trinity is not in any way intended to “conflate” the Persons which are represented by the Trinitarian formula.

3.7 Semiotics and Abduction

It may be that RCR will not be a directly observable attribute and whatever data are collected need to be tested by “abduction.” The *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (Reber, 1995) locates the term in C.S. Pierce’s theory of semiotics. Abduction is a creative “*cognitive process whereby hypotheses are generated on the basis of some known facts.*” But the difficulty with this is that the “facts” are not necessarily substantiated – we are dealing with propositions about data, not concrete “facts.” It is then a matter of taking some proposition and asking what kind of logic is being used,

and at what level. Within this perspective and related research processes, the “facts” to be gathered are actually expressions of the way in which statements are conceptualized. In other words, the “facts” are “known” in terms of *a priori* criteria. The assumption – that there are logical dimensions to any statement – constructs the facts. This hermeneutical irony is indicative of the unavoidable interdependence between “facts” and the assumptions (which may be expressed as a hypothesis).

To advance the task of interpretation (consistent with his multiplex heuristics), Reich (1990a, p.149) briefly refers to Peirce’s semiotics, with the advantage that it can be related to the Trinity concept. From many possible definitions of Peircean semiotics, Reich refers to Peirce’s preoccupation with the number 3 (or “threeness”), and his development of a triadic theory of the sign in which the sign (= Representamen) has a relation to an Object, which relation entails an Interpretant. The Object which gives rise to the Sign may be immediate (for example, a picture of some thing or person) or dynamic (for example, some thing/person that exists which is independent of the sign, but nevertheless gives rise to its production.)

If the Trinity is a Sign, then it can be pictured as a triangle or thought of as Beings who together form a triadic relation. The Interpretant (not the "interpreter") is actually the Sign in the mind that results in an encounter with the Sign. Therefore, in Peirce’s semiotics, the Interpretant is how we think of the Trinity following either observation of an immediate Sign (picture of triangle) or comprehension of the triadic relations (Reich probably would say, as the result of thinking in terms of complementarity.) So this is consistent with the form: If RCR, then understanding (the sign in the mind).

Reich's approach to logic involves using “abduction” to support the conclusion that “at least some of the Fathers thought in terms of complementarity” (Reich, 1990a, p.149). Reich credits Peirce with this logical possibility. Sless (1986, p.141) identifies complementarist approaches in Peirce's work, but suggests that Peirce's followers seem to have misapplied his work by developing complex classificatory systems. Sless claims that Peirce was really interested in the classification of “stand-for relations” and this was related to various contexts (hence a tenuous connection to relational contextual reasoning). As such, it is a doctrine founded on eclecticism - very much like Reich's -

wherein Peirce wished for an open-endedness in his thinking (Gelpi, 2001). Such lack of *a priori* determination may be thought of as the essence of freedom, inherently and consistently Trinitarian, unsympathetic to all forms of authoritarianism.

3.8 A thought-form for the Trinity

To proceed with the analysis of RCR and the Trinity, we need “a particular thought form” that will be able to apply a “multilogical/multilevel solution.” Reich (1995b, p.396) relates this to analogies and similarities. Therefore:

The point is that really complex states of affairs as encountered here (as distinct from complicated states that simply have many components, either unconnected or related in simple, straightforward ways) often require complex conceptualization for a deeper understanding The need for an appropriate thought form springs from that state of affairs: to be productive, the inquiry system has to match the problem structure. If the problems are as complex as those we are dealing with, the thought form must be complex too, even if the result turns out to be comparatively plain.

The theological and logical expositions of the Trinity are inexhaustible. A study of how the adoption of the Trinity doctrine became a significant factor within the transformation of an enigmatic sect might only come to tentative conclusions. Reich (2002b, p.114) admits that the application of his RCR heuristic “is more of a programme for further work than a complete achievement,” but he claims for it these advantages:

- It narrows the focus, by segmenting the field into appropriate domains. Presumably this is done in a multiple and overlapping way, so that the whole field is covered.
- It results in a single, relational categorization (presumably unifying Barbour’s “conflict, independence, dialogue and integration” phases).
- It emphasises context-dependence.

The details of this procedure will be displayed in the methodology chapter, where an attempt is made through hermeneutical means to develop a correspondence between RCR, Trinitarian thinking, and the cognitive conversion of the WCG leaders. In this attempt, the doctrine of the Trinity also functions as a heuristic of the way in which the relational and contextual understanding of the WCG leaders has developed.

3.9 Coherence and meaning

Reich (1990a, p.150) also suggests that some complex ideas have at least “functional coherence,” even though deficient in unified laws of connection. Such idea-units may be readily perceived to be amalgams of two or more aspects or referents, paradoxically related yet making sense as a whole. The object of analysis (the Trinity) possessing a problem structure (entailing aspects that might be complementary) is to be approached with a way of thinking that is homologous to that structure (therefore complementarist). In this way, cognitive operations are matched to problem structure.

Reich (1990a, p.151) suggests that logical impossibilities can be solved if there are shifts in meaning of the concepts involved. New interpretations are possible in different contexts of observation. This relates to the open-endedness of sign interpretation, as suggested by Peirce (Fetzer & Almeder, 1993, p.103, and perhaps the re-allocation of “respect” of Being as noted by Erickson (2000, p.90). This is explained as the possibility that the “un-nominated” members of the Trinity are not negated during the time that one member functions nominally (but as wholly God), in relation to the Two Natures of Christ. Reich (1990a, p.151) suggests that “on account of the common properties and the coinherences, both modes of being are actually present in different situations as well as in the same situation” although each mode's features may be obscured “depending on the circumstances” (that is, the natures are known in context). Erickson (2000, p.67) even implies that the members of the Trinity may be discerned by the context.

The above limitations on perception would also conceal other insights that could otherwise contribute to a mature grasp of Christian theology. Reich (1990a, p.152) uses McKay's example of the Biblical story of Joseph (Hebrew plenipotentiary of ancient Egypt) to explain how functional units are delineated and then understood in terms of

competing explanations: for example, a “naturalistic” one and a “revelatory” one. In terms of circularity, the two explanations need not extinguish or limit one another. Presumably both can be “true.” What is missing from this discussion is the notion of “position” in relation to a text. Sless (1986) argues that the position of the reader is significant for the “stand-for” relations that may arise. Apart from the many other possibilities, if the reader of the Joseph account has a position of “historical veracity” then the text must come under intense scrutiny as a “factual story.” Otherwise, the biblical narrative must be understood entirely in its “stand-for” character (thus as metaphor or as part of a larger canvas upon which is drawn a series of accounts of God's graciousness in the midst of legal claims). Joseph, then, in the place of Pharaoh (a “god”) acts as justifier of his brethren (indeed, his oneness with them according to blood is concealed for a while). The Chalcedonian (Christological) significance of this pericope, particularly the connection between God-man, and Law-grace, is self-evident. The WCG leaders have experienced reformation of belief in a number of areas, although a coherent and meaningful integration of these new beliefs remains a work in progress.

Reich (1990a, p.152) reminds us that “the problem contents - as distinct from the problem structure - seem to have little bearing on the competence to think in terms of complementarity” and that this indicates “pragmatic reasoning schema.” Reich revisits the content aspect in later papers, but here we should consider Oser and Gmünder (1991, p.150), who utilize structuralism in their explanations of theological and developmental texts. It is apparent that Oser and Gmünder (hence Reich, as a collaborator with the “Fribourg School”) have adopted structural analyses of cognition and development (linking the structure of thinking and moral development, into a parallel - if not connected - stage theory) and have sought to create a “double parallel” (by abduction) by linking this with the structure of Biblical texts or theological concepts. That presumes that structural theory can be legitimately applied to such texts/concepts (Aichele, 1997; Leach and Laycock, 1983). Reich (1990a, p.153) relies on Peirce's notion of Abduction to arrive at his original supposition: “that at least some Fathers thought in terms of complementarity” but RCR's application might rely on more than abduction.

In the quest for explanations that both demonstrate the action - and prove the existence of it through the presumed action - of complementarity reasoning, Reich's

empirical examples partially demonstrate both the existence and application of complementarity thinking, at least in the theological matter under discussion. Reich (1990a, p.156) admits how “speculative” all this is, given the relatively recent emergence of cognitive psychology, but he gives as his chief claim for the theory – “Because of its great usefulness!,” primarily in stimulating theological thinking and reformation throughout the centuries, particularly in “the raised consciousness about the unique attributes of Jesus Christ.”

3.10 RCR as the required thought-form

Reich (1994a, p.114) states that “We refer now to that form of thought as *relational and contextual reasoning*, previously called thinking in terms of complementarity or complementarity reasoning.” He also suggests that reasoning has two other features that need to be taken into account. Firstly (following Polanyi; see Polanyi & Prosch, 1977), Reich proposes that reasoning can be tacit (that is, it is present but inexplicable). Secondly, Reich proposes that reasoning (involved in grasping an idea) may be necessary but not sufficient. That is, a belief needs to be understood logically, but there is more than logic to the belief. Implicit in Reich's discussion is the following paradox: Whilst “higher” thinking is necessary for certain kinds of religious belief, with “higher” thinking (or more education) often comes less religious belief. So, as a person becomes more educated he/she is less likely to believe in the very beliefs that he/she now can understand! Paradoxically, the results of Reich's study (Reich, 1994, p.124) led him to admit that Fowler may be right in claiming that higher thinking can lead to a strengthening of faith, rather than loss.

Reich’s arguments in the above paper proceed as follows. There are two other aspects of reasoning involved: First, the kind of reasoning needed to arrive at the belief; the second is the kind of reasoning (rationality) inherent in the belief (in this case, the extent to which the belief's rationality and the believer's rationality are concurrent). It is speculated that the first kind may be a pre-requisite to comprehend the second. What kind of logic is needed to understand the logic of the belief? They should be compatible. Perhaps by “deconstructing” the logic of the belief, one has the key to approach it. We explain something by first explaining the logic of the thing, then asking someone to follow that logic to the conclusion - perhaps to believe in the thing, or believe in a

quality or feature of the thing. That might make the Trinity “logical” but may not compel belief in the doctrine. In Chapter 5, it will be evident that Dr. Stavrinides seems to have applied the above approach, to argue the Trinitarian case to WCG ministers, with mixed results.

3.11 RCR and the Three-Person God

Initially, Reich (1995d, p.387) preferred, as his “foundational concept”, complementarity, “which in this case involves the joining together of ‘contradictory’ partial explanations for the understanding of the explanandum, symbolizes unity in diversity, and goes beyond the argumentative limits set by classical logic, in particular as regards any intrinsic linkage between the various partial ‘theories’.” But “complementarity,” as understood by its exponents, was not sufficiently intelligible to others and Reich (1995d, p.387) hints at a compromise – the use of “a foundational concept which embodies (most of) the useful aspects of complementarity yet is less ambiguous and more familiar, in particular to theologians” (p.387). On the way to RCR as a new conceptualisation of complementarity, Reich leads into analogical reasoning.

Reich presents as his analogy par excellence the Trinity. But there is a double meaning here - logically, the Trinity becomes the Foundational Concept, and it does indeed have that role in numerous theological works. It is apparent that the Trinity is not only a “procedural tool” for dealing with these complex issues, but is also “materially” central to them, and not only these problems, but as the “unifying core that generates diversity in the universe of time and space, and all relations.” Thus the Trinity is *not just a word*. Reich in a footnote (1995d p.401) states that he is not trying to put forward some universal idea (he is not suggesting a *vestigium trinitatis*). Reich is limiting his consideration of RCR and the Trinity to epistemological and cognitive aspects, and wishes to avoid a sectarian-biased exercise. He leaves open the possibility of a feminine Spirit, and admits that "divine trinities" existed in ancient religions.

Reich’s approach might be entirely consistent with his presumptions – that statements may be amenable to the discovery of RCR within them. Of course, the statements need to be about topics where RCR might more readily be found. We are not

dealing with statements that are internally contradictory (oxymorons) but which are incompatible with other statements about the same thing. For example:

- (1) The Trinity is logical.
- (2) The Trinity is not logical.

RCR allows us to agree with both statements, if the definition and scope of “logic” were elastic enough, that is, if “logical” means different things in the two assertions, such that they are no longer representable in logical form - (1) X is A (2) X is not A. Perhaps in an “Aristotelian” either/or logic, the Trinity is not logical. But with “complementarity” logic, the acceptance of One does not require the rejection of Three. Edgar (2004, p.21) asserts that the Trinity is logical “but logic alone does not enable the Trinity to be understood. It is more a matter of faith.” What about the case where “logic” is not admitted? Note the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* – on “Trinity” (Livingstone & Cross, 1997). The Trinity

is held to be a mystery in the strict sense, in that it can neither be known by unaided human reason apart from revelation, nor cogently demonstrated by reason after it had been revealed. On the other hand it is maintained that, though the mystery is above reason, it is not contrary to it, for it is not incompatible with the principles of rational thought.

If statements about the Trinity are taken at face value, they are merely assertions, not conscious applications of reasoning. Anyone can utter the words “God is One” or “God is Three” without understanding or believing these statements. As we are dealing with rational beings, we need to identify the rationale for making the statement. Without direct access to anyone’s reasoning, only the effects can be dealt with – that is, statements that reveal the outcome of the reasoning, but not all the steps. It does not matter if we do not have an accurate procession of steps, as the act of explaining will show the implicit steps of the person’s argument. The question is: How does the person explain their *reasons* for a belief. In this, “reasons” can be taken to be cognate with “reasoning.” That is, their *reasons are the evidence of reasoning* sought for, and thus to understand the type of reasoning, we need to evaluate the reasons. If the reasons given

relate to logic {"the reason why I don't believe in the Trinity is because it is illogical"} we can consider the reason why it isn't logical. That is, we ask "Why don't you think it is logical?" If the answer is an "either/or" one, we have a result; on the other hand, if the person says "I believe the Trinity IS logical", what does the person mean by "logic"?

There is a likelihood that people who can't explain a thing (for example, the Trinity) will insist that the topic is inexplicable and possibly should not be explained because it is (a) a matter of faith, or (b) a sacred mystery. If a thing can't be explained logically, perhaps it can be explained "metalogically." Following on from the *Oxford* definition, above, if the Trinity cannot be known by logic alone – that is, the believers did not come to it by use of superior logic – this does not mean that it cannot be logically explained once the belief is adopted. But what kind of logic is used? In an attempt to explain a concept, using any kind of logic will not necessarily explain the concept in terms of the logic necessary to understand the concept, but it is "logical" nevertheless. Few people venture to explain the type of logic they are using and few perceive that their reasoning is inadequate for the conclusions they still hold. This is the conundrum we must face below, when considering RCR as a precondition for Trinitarian thinking.

3.12 Bechtel and Richardson's Model

To explain how the Trinity "works" runs the risk of "dismembering" the concept. To illustrate this possibility, Reich (1995d, p.388) cites Bechtel & Richardson (1993): "Decomposition allows the subdivision of the explanatory task so that the task becomes manageable and the system intelligible," and "Localization is the identification of the different activities in a task composition with the behavior or capacities of specific components." Simply put, the reduction of the Godhead to three separate identities – for the purpose of studying each separately and attempting to relate them in some way – reduces each identity to a "component" rather than revealing the subtleties of "triple identity" within Oneness. Critics of the use of complementarity in social sciences have warned about "componentialism" as a false explanation of complementarity. The above quotes, if applied to the Trinity, would require us to study the operations of each Person (that is, "localize" them). In other words, to know how (the Triune) God operates, requires us to know how each Person of the Trinity operates,

for the understanding of how they operate together depends on understanding each Person's activity. Even Erickson (2000, p.67) expresses it this way: "it is possible to think of the Father as the originator or source of the creation, the Son as the designer or organizer of the creation, and the Spirit as the executor of the act of creation, the one who actually carries it out." Reich (1995d, p.390) muses that, in another direction, we might be "facing a nondecomposable, connectionist system." The other danger is that what looks like tri-unity becomes tritheism. Reich (1995d, p.390) attempts to explain Divinity by way of a semantic analogy. The *word* Divinity is decomposable, in that Divinity cannot be understood apart from the Divinity's relations to the world, human beings, the history of these relationships, and so on. But can Divinity (*per se*) be decomposed? Reich states that, outside of Trinitarian formulas, Divinity's presence in all components leads to pantheism, and Divinity as actor in separately defined activities leads to polytheism.

Yet Reich finds value in Bechtel & Richardson's (1993) model. It consists of a number of "choice points," in a decision tree, and Choice Point 1 involves identifying a "locus of control" for the phenomenon. This refers to an area where research is to be managed, including the topics and concepts involved. In the present thesis, there are three such loci:

- The problem case - what accounts for WCG changes?
- The bridging concept - The Trinity - as both context/content of what was changed, and as relational (complementarity) concept that explains what was needed to change, and how it was changeable.
- The solution concept - RCR - using the bridging concept (Trinity) to explain the means of change, in terms of the changed construct (Trinity) and suggest reasons for change (cognitive development), and as validation of the interpreting system (RCR).

Reich is more interested in Choice Point 4, a place where "localization" becomes most complex, therefore calling for "multilogical/multilevel treatment." Reich (1995d, p.391) uses the Trinity to illustrate this point. This is to show how the *perichoresis* could not be explained by classical, Aristotelian logic, but required

metalogical reasoning. That is, “a grasp of the differences between various types of logic” (p.391). It is noted that:

- Augustine used Aristotelian logic to deal with the Trinity's internal relations.
- Aquinas used the same logic, only in relations between Trinity and the world (*opera ad extra*), but used another logic (“of real relations”) to deal with the Trinity's internal relations (*opera ad intra*). Presumably “real” means that the internal relations are eternally real whereas the external relations are temporal and distanced from God.
- These internal relations were described by the word *perichoresis*. This relates to the *circumcessio/circumsessio* distinction introduced earlier.

How do we deal with the Trinity at Choice Point 4? Reich (p.391) refers us to Barth and Pannenberg's suggestions that God is understood as “an intrinsically differentiated unity.” Reich’s argument might go like this: God is eternal and unchangeable, but also embraces time and changeable events in that time ... So limited time and changeable events become eternal and unchangeable, but do not lose their distinctiveness. This could be applied to Jesus, who in his instance - temporal/spatial - was “a man of his time and place” yet also God, in eternity and unbounded by locality, and by extension to the believer who remains identifiable (in terms of when he/she lived and where and with particular relationships tied to time/space) but whose identity is also caught up into God eternally Thus “the solution of the problem of that double description of eternity lies in the Trinitarian perichoresis” (Reich, 1995d, p.392).

3.13 The need for “trivalent” logic

Reich (Huber, Reich, & Schenker, 2000, p.6) reminds us that “trivalent logic, which involves context dependence, is germane to the understanding of the doctrines” (of the Two Natures of Christ and the Trinity). From Reich’s explanation it may be surmised that this can be expressed as formulae:

- *If RCR is developed, there will be an increase in understanding of X (a topic that is paradoxical, contradictory);*

- As understanding of X is increased, following stimulation by RCR, there will be further development of RCR, leading to a deeper understanding of X (and other topics of a paradoxical nature).

The above “formulae” arise from the description of RCR and the Trinity so far, relate to the research question posed (see page 43), and lie at the heart of what is expected in the analysis of the Worldwide Church of God leaders’ appropriation of Trinitarian theology. Christ and the Trinity are selected because “both doctrines go against the grain of formal binary logic” (p.6). Reich suggests, as more appropriate, “a trivalent logic, which involves context dependence” (p.6). If a person demonstrates the capacity to explain the doctrines of the two natures of Christ, and the Trinity, using language that is mindful of the complexity of the belief, it is assumed that they are thinking with RCR and, therefore, “would also solve appropriate problems at high RCR levels” (p.7), as suggested by the second dot point above. This appears to be a reflexive (reciprocal) process, although it looks as though the outcome has been confused with the antecedent. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the methodology chapter, RCR (as formulated by Reich) appears to operate both as a threshold criterion (either RCR is present or it is not), and as a tiered construct, the levels of which roughly correspond to other stage theories of development. The distinction between “threshold” and “tiered” RCR is problematic, as the theory seems to accept elements of the tiered levels as present in the “preliminary” condition (RCR Level 1) to justify (potential) placement at a “higher” level.

To determine whether a person understands the doctrines – and therefore thinks in RCR (that is, passes the threshold test; the matter of RCR level is a further consideration) – respondents (in Reich’s study) were asked about statements on the Trinity. Responses (Huber, Reich & Schenker, 2000) were classified as follows:

- (1) “*The doctrines are rationally incomprehensible, one can only believe in them*” (p.7) – note, this would apply to people who accept the doctrine by faith – and follow the *Oxford* definition quoted earlier – and also those who reject the doctrine, on the grounds that it is irrational or illogical.

- (2) “*The doctrines are really strange, but I understand something*” (p.7) – note, this is a transitional condition, where the person may be aware of understanding emerging but is not yet able to explain.
- (3) “*I understand the doctrines fully - they express well what I believe*” (and the statement is supported by justifications) (p.7). This is not the same as saying “I believe --- therefore I understand.” By “justifications”, Reich apparently means a reasoned account that weighs the value of several alternatives and takes aspects of them into account, or omits some aspects, for good reason.

Following on from the above sorting process, respondents were given three standard problems [Artistic performance; Nuclear accident; Mind/heart behaviour] and the responses were rated according to “the RCR coding manual” (cf. Reich 2002b, appendix). For each of the classes (1,2,3 above), respondents were placed in a set – within which they were positioned following their responses to the Three Standard Problems according to their RCR level. The outcome was that those who were classed as #3 (Fully understood Trinity) had no low, but all high RCR levels. Those who were classed #1 (Could not understand Trinity) had some low RCR levels, but it is noted that most were at the middle or above level (IV/V). Reich also admits that some of the low scores were the result of lack of religious knowledge or interests.

Reich (Huber, Reich, & Schenker, 2000, p.9) concludes that “it was established that a **high level of RCR is a necessary condition for understanding rationally the doctrines concerned,**” and “Hence, understanding seems to develop along with the development of an appropriate form of reasoning.” Reich’s claims that need to be tested are that:

- Some problems can only be understood or explained rationally by the use of RCR. The Trinity is one of those problems, as it has elements of non-compatibility.
- If a satisfactory explanation of such a problem (for instance, the Trinity) is given, it would be an indication that RCR was used.

- If a person has used RCR in one problem (the Trinity could be a “test case”) then they are likely to identify problems that require the use of RCR, and then use that type of reasoning.

3.14 The relevance of Trinitarian theology

How would parallel and circular complementarity be applied to the Trinity? In “parallel” complementarity, “members” of the Trinity would need to be counted as “God” in the same way. With the establishment of the Godhood of the Son, with the same nature and properties as the Father, there is the possibility of both being personally God; by extension, the Holy Spirit becomes both God and Person, sharing the same nature and properties of the Father and the Son. Although we are describing a triad where parallelism is inappropriate, the parallel is tenable as follows: Father/Son, Father/Spirit, Son/Spirit. In the Christological paradox, the parallels may be God/Son and Son/Jesus, involving at least a double identification and eventually incorporation into the Trinity. In “circular” complementarity, there would be interdependent relations of the Trinity members, each co-existent with the others. For a full account of this, called *perichoresis*, see Erickson (2000) and Torrance (1996).

Yet it must be admitted that a full tri-une relation was not the starting point for this formulation. Mainstream Biblical scholarship (Letham, 2004) accepts that “The [early] church understood its worship of Jesus as within the boundaries of OT [Old Testament] monotheism” (p.52) but this arose as a “mutation” of monotheism. Furthermore, “There is little doubt that the explicit focus of worship was binitarian” (p.52). That is, God was recognized as a duality, not as two Gods. The early church had no difficulty accepting this, since its faith was grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Even in the binitarian antecedents to Trinitarianism, the Deity’s capacity for reciprocity and dialogue was tacitly acknowledged (Pratt, 1985). Drawing on Polanyi’s idea of tacit knowledge, Letham (p.55) reports biblical studies that show that there emerged a Trinitarian “consciousness” despite Christ being the centre of attention. Letham (p.55) quotes Toon (1996):

An explicit binitarianism and an implicit trinitarianism can therefore be seen to belong to the same Faith. For only a dogmatic binitarianism denies a Trinitarian consciousness and an implicit trinitarianism.

This is highly significant for the consideration of the old WCG position and the remaining opposition to its adoption of the Trinity, especially in terms of the RCR perspective. The dogmatism that refused to admit the personal place of the Holy Spirit within a complete understanding of the Godhead rendered the holders of this position *unconscious* to the Trinitarian possibilities. A complementarity-based perspective, once adopted, would have enabled this development whilst, at the same time, allowed the retention of a Christ-centred theology (which some still mistake for the only tenable position, that is, classic binitarianism). Once it is understood that the Holy Spirit is not a separate “being,” or mere power, with independent existence, it is open to believers to experience the Holy Spirit as “the spiritual medium and power, hitherto associated exclusively with God (Yahweh, and then the Father), in which the personal presence and activity of Christ are experienced by his community” (Coffey, 1999, p.11).

The early Armstrong movement easily accepted the Arian position that “the distinctions among the three persons are external to God” (Grenz, 2004, p.7), as they had a deficient understanding of the traditional explanation of the internal relations of the Godhead. It is an easy move from denoting external distinctions to identifying distinct “beings” in the Godhead, rather than accepting the orthodox position of One Being, yet in three *hypostases* (“realities,” imperfectly translated as “persons”). Most of the old (or continuing) Armstrongite arguments rely heavily on artificial distinctions between the “beings” of the Godhead, and thus miss the point of the internal relationships, so central to the development of the accepted doctrine. Grudem (1994, pp.558-560) insists that the paradox must be maintained if “infinite deity and finite humanity can exist together in the same person,” thus confirming the incarnation (physical embodiment of Christ). Grudem wishes to refute the assertion that it is impossible for logically opposing categories to coexist. Evidently Grudem and Erickson are relying on a complementarist resolution to the paradox.

Those aspects of the Trinity that might bear some resemblance to the complementarity theme can be seen in Grenz (2004), who offers a chapter on “The

triumph of relationality.” Although complementarity is not specifically mentioned in the book, it does trace a movement from a metaphysics of substance to a relational conception of God’s beingness. Prominent among these thinkers are Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Boff, but the contribution of John Zizioulas, a modern thinker in the Byzantine tradition, is perhaps more central to our concerns. The legacy of Hegel’s subjective, dialectical formulation resulted in a re-interpretation of Trinitarian relations as a kind of social and psychological divine community, but with tritheistic connotations. In reaction, there was an inversion of this model from “three persons who have relations” to “three subsistent relations that are in fact persons” (Grenz, 2004, p.133).

A deeper insight into how people are drawn into Trinitarian relations is found in Zizioulas’ thought, where the ecclesiastical dimension is tied to the eucharistic presence, where the church is always made present in and through the realization of human relatedness by the relational God’s participation which substantiates the Christian’s identity. The connection goes further in that it allows an integration of personhood, establishing a reality behind the mask of personality. In this thinking, connection with God’s triune reality allows for oneness of being apart from the transient shadows of existence, allowing for authentic engagement with the Other, not just relations for their own sake. In this experience, being and relations are fused, the concept of being itself being relational. That is, “*To be and to be in relation* become identical” (Zizioulas, cited in Grenz, 2004, p.136). The concepts of relations and contexts are inherent in the various Trinitarian expositions, as variously espoused by church traditions, but these are not made explicit in a way that identifies the operation of complementarity as such, nor the progression from lower to high levels of reasoning.

3.15 Short critical evaluation of Reich’s application of RCR to the Trinity

As discussed in Chapter 2, Reich’s use of theological material to exemplify the operation of “complementarity” thinking, directly relevant to this present thesis, commenced with “The Chalcedonian Definition: which logic?” (Reich, 1989b) and “The Chalcedonian Definition, an example of the difficulties and usefulness of thinking in terms of complementarity” (Reich, 1990a), followed by “The doctrine of the Trinity as a model for structuring the relations between science and theology” (Reich, 1995d).

These papers were based on the assumption that the scientific notion of complementarity was transposable to psychology and theology, and pre-date the emergence of “relational and contextual reasoning.”

Setting aside for now the difficulties inherent in the shift from one view of complementarity thinking to a contextually-based version, without a clear explanation of how this can be justified empirically (if not logically), attention can be drawn to the emergence of a “heuristic” flowing from the basic assumption that problems and methods of dealing with them should be correlated. There is also some confusion arising from a componential, and then a stage, view of RCR, which have both threshold (either/or) and hierarchical (Levels I-V) characteristics. Reich’s theological survey, related to the Two Natures of Christ and the Three Hypostases of God, involves some overlap and potential confusion. An explanation in one mode seems to serve as explanation in another mode. From Reich’s discussion, some may understand complementarity and RCR to be the same concept, with identical terms of operation.

Furthermore, there may be some confusion between identifying RCR as a kind of reasoning that can be applied to a problem or paradox (either to resolve conflict or – ironically opposed to this – to preserve the paradox in respect of the concept’s inherent and valued characteristics) and identifying a problem or concept as itself having characteristics making it amenable to RCR analysis. Whatever the definitive version of Reich’s theory, it poses an interpretive difficulty. Thus the application of the theory (in this case to the Trinity and the WCG leaders’ acceptance of the doctrine and their cognitive conversion) calls for a deeper interpretative method, to be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Method: the qualitative application of Relational and Contextual Reasoning to the case study.

4.1 Methodological considerations

4.1.1 General hermeneutical approach

Relational and Contextual Reasoning (RCR) has emerged as a kind of exploratory theoretical perspective. The present thesis attempts to use Reich's proto-theory to investigate the remarkable transformation of an unusual religious organization, the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Not only is the WCG characterized by paradox, its transformation also included adoption of the complex doctrine of the Trinity. Comparable entities involving such multiple complexities, for the purpose of comparative study, could not be located and, in respect of the limited access to investigate the WCG, this present study probably will never be repeated. The findings must be accepted and interpreted on their own terms, in the pursuit of deeper understanding of psychological phenomena.

This research, nevertheless, is fundamentally empirical, based as it is on objective materials and human responses, and on substantive reports of organizational and belief changes that altogether provide an account of paradigm shifts and worldview transformation. From this grounded approach to theory, detailed changes in thinking can be considered, towards a holistic comprehension of the cognitive change process. Yet, as far as religious sects go, this definitive study can be considered alongside the ideal type without having to undergo comparative study based on quantitative measures (Southard, 1976, p.92). As an open-ended inquiry, it can lead to "more emphasis upon dynamics and creativity in explanation, and less emphasis upon statistical abstractions or excessive causal analysis" (p.93). The quantification of these sets of complexity would be inappropriate, simply because "there are areas of life that do not yield to quantitative or experimental investigation" (Michell, 2004, p.312). The application of

this principle is most apt in the case of the doctrine of the Trinity. In support of a qualitative approach to psychological research on such complexities, Michell (p.315) states:

The attributes (viz., the properties and relations) characterizing the predicate term of a situation need to be investigated in their own right and their structures identified via the observational methods tailored to the vicissitudes and complexities of our interactions with them.

The study of how people interpret – and how their interpretations should be interpreted – opens up understanding of the Reichian vision, and there will need to be interpretive interactions between the proposed theory, the case study organization, and individual accounts of personal thinking. The integrative nature of these elements is demonstrated, for example, by the method of understanding prevalent in the Armstrong era of the WCG. Textual (in this case, Biblical) exposition in the old WCG paradigm was based on “proof-texting” rather than considering the text as a whole (Johnson 1983:25). Such an approach (relying as it does on the selective use of isolated statements, which are given some authoritative status) led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the text, and contributed to a tangled web of beliefs. “A single doctrine is never held in isolation from other doctrines, but rather is always part of a system or network of beliefs held by a person or group” (Bowman, 1992, p.51). The WCG now considers that its theological edifice was constructed in error, which led to its eventual collapse. Along with this came a paradigm shift in the metaphysics and hermeneutics of those affected, culminating in a crisis of corporate and individual identity.

The psychological dimensions studied within this project, therefore, whilst cognitive in nature, take into account the interpretive nature of established accounts of thinking. It may be that more is known about theories of thinking than about the process of cognitive transformation in detail. The conjectural nature of much of Piaget’s, Kohlberg’s and Erikson’s writings is well known and, in this thesis, we are dealing with the meta-speculations of Helmut Reich, who hopes to stimulate transtheoretical analyses which might lead to an integration of the field. Is there a “logic” of the interconnections between (inter) various beliefs, or within (intra) them? Some (Carson, 1996, p.89) refer

to universal axiomatic relationships, which might be relevant here. In the case of Chalcedon, “a person who holds that Jesus is both God and man goes to considerable trouble to formulate this truth in ways that are not demonstrably *il*logical, even if the explanation of this God-man’s nature is not exhaustive” (p.89). Furthermore:

The necessary substratum of all coherent knowledge and of all rational communication is simple logic in this first sense. The fundamental “laws” of logic, such as the law of noncontradiction and the law of the excluded middle, are universally true.” (p.89)

Carson (1996, p.90) also refers to “false disjunctions” – that is, “a false either/or requirement when complementarity might be acceptable.” This shows some concern in religious studies for logical statements, and it is possible to transcend either/or thinking, although regarding the Trinity, unorthodox Christians are said to use selective citing of “proof texts,” deliberately, through ignorance or misguided learning (Sire, 1980, p.80), thus polarizing the debate into a hard either/or position. To identify such defective reasoning, one would have to be familiar with the orthodox position, and “the key issues, concepts and opinions identified through thematization” (Bouma, 1996, p.184). In WCG and ex-WCG sources perused for the present thesis, statements concerning the Trinity usually are explicit (whether pro or con), and often negative but with little or no critical analysis.

If, from the standpoint of a review of the WCG and ex-WCG positions, a critical approach were taken, then it would be necessary to “recognize that events and objects comprising the social world may be viewed as contradictory albeit mutually dependent structures” (Arneson, 1993, p.167). If the textuality of the social world and the source material were considered together, then the matter of human understanding should be approached by way of interpretation, as suggested by K.B. Jensen (1991, p.31):

... the literary notion of exegesis, or “reading”, normally implies a cognitive operation of analysis-cum-interpretation, in which no firm line can be drawn between the analysis of “data” and the subsequent discussion of aggregated “findings”. *The primary tool of research is the interpretive capacity of the scholar.* The meaning of each constitutive element of a text is established with

reference to its con-text – the rest of the text as a whole. The wider significance of the text may then be established by considering also the social context of historical and psychoanalytical factors, which offer cues to understanding specific literary periods, authors, readerships, or discursive themes {italics added}

The hermeneutical method is a contextual procedure (Lindloff, 1995, p.31), well-suited to RCR, where the different types (or levels) of reasoning – especially at the “higher” level – involve considering matters from different angles and taking into account various juxtapositions. The diversity of religious experience gives rise to a variety of “religious constructs” (Hood et al., 1996, p.445). In religious ideas, RCR is a construct that defies easy measurement and, to deal with this, a hermeneutical approach is gaining acceptability within a methodologically pluralistic scholarly environment. Thus (p.446):

The psychology of religion is likely to become more like a quilt, in which measurement will at best sew together patches derived from diverse theoretical perspectives.

Furthermore, most of the papers on hermeneutics are speculative proposals for the approach rather than advancing precise formulae or methods of application. By default, the interpreter is liable to idiosyncratic inferences, not surprising since hermeneutics itself is a “volatile mix” of theories (Anderson, 1996, p.72).

The present thesis, by bringing together RCR and the WCG, acknowledges that “Idiographic studies are of immense value, both as unique narratives in their own right, and as instances of a general law concretely particularized” (Hood, et al, p.447). Furthermore, “Hood has argued that psychological processes, empirically identified, are of little use in making predictions unless the content of specific faith traditions is taken into account” (p.451). In that the present thesis seeks to present a rich account of a sect’s transformation, in regard to a deep and complex belief, especially with regard to its contemporary situation, the chosen research approach earns scholarly acceptance. Furthermore, (according to “*About Hermeneutics*”, n.d., p.1):

Without collapsing critical thinking into relativism, hermeneutics recognizes the historicity of human understanding. Ideas are nested in historical, linguistic, and cultural horizons of meaning. A philosophical, theological, or literary problem can only be genuinely understood through a grasp of its origin

Hermeneutics does not re-construct the past for its own sake; it always seeks to understand the particular way a problem engages the present.

To take a hermeneutical approach is consistent with the RCR heuristic, which allows for each domain to be a site for signification and meaning. The WCG's situation is complex and somewhat conflicted, and its belief structure requires better cohesion. Thus the approach taken in its study involves moving between various positions, in search of some integration. Classically, "Hermeneutic empiricism assumes a world of multiple domains of phenomena with no common foundation" (Anderson, 1996, p.16), where each province of meaning (Schutz, in Lonergan, 1958) has its own mandate, and questions are contextualized within it. However, the use of RCR is suggested because it is also trans-foundational in that concepts are capable of re-appraisal or re-flexion when encountered in other modalities. Thus the interpretation of concepts is not exclusively tied to any *sitz im leben*. Rather, they are meaningful across several domains.

Traditional content analysis usually results in a quantification that is taken to be the "factual characteristics" of the matter, wherein "Meaning is contained in the factual characteristics, codes, themes, topics, metaphors, and structure of the work" (Anderson, 1996, p.73). However, by understanding the text as a site of contested meaning, and allowing for the legitimate toleration of multiple and genuinely incompatible interpretations, the use of RCR might hold out hope for some compromise. The result is ectopic (that is, appears in an unusual form) and also supports an "argument that a claim can be both true and not true at the same time" (p.74). The business of hermeneutics therefore "is founded on the principle that work must be done before some object of analysis can become meaningful. Hermeneutic writing is, therefore, double writing: writing about the object of analysis and writing about the work to make it meaningful" (p.119).

Consequently, in the quest for ascertaining whether something is understood, it is not a search for truth, *per se*, but whether or not the thing is "truly" understood. This

is logically problematic, as the state of truly understanding something has ontological implications which hermeneutics implicitly (if not explicitly) adhere to. Truth situated in one domain is accepted as such, but not completely. For truth to be understood holistically, hermeneutics “depends on there being multiple domains of reality that require different forms of explanation” (p.191). The task of understanding traverses several domains, for it is relationship in various contexts that makes the difference. Following Heidegger, “As a research methodology, hermeneutics assumes dialogue and movement between wholes of texts and parts of texts” (Byrne, 1998, p.2). RCR, in moving between relation and context, is isomorphic to this interpretive task.

Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach (Byrne, 1998, p.2) deals with “prejudgment” (that could clarify what prevented the WCG from seeing the Trinity in the new way earlier, as there is an assumption that RCR was lacking from WCG thinking prior to its Trinitarian understanding). “Prejudices are our preconceived notions of things, emanating from our past experience and socialization” (p.2). Gadamer believed that it was impossible to “bracket out” this. Therefore, “To understand another [that is, View] we cannot shed our past experience, because it is this past experience that actually facilitates our understanding of another” (p.2) but only where it accords with the other experience. Where it does not, it may lead to prejudice. Furthermore, “Experience is an ongoing examination of status quo” (p.2) and self-examination applies to both researcher and those under study. “Rather than being an impediment to knowledge making, it is the researcher’s values that provide contextual meaning to their consumers.” The research implications for this are to explicate a “lens for analysis” and “making the researcher’s judgments explicit” (p.2). Therefore “Methodologic implications of Gadamer support a method of interpretive content analysis in contrast to a research method of content analysis of absolute and universally defined words and categories This may be done through the researcher’s horizon or lens of analysis” (p.3). The latter mandate has been justifiably followed in this present thesis.

For Gadamer, “understanding is not a matter of trained, methodological, unprejudiced technique, but an encounter in the existentialist sense, a confrontation with something radically different from ourselves” (Outhwaite, 1985, p.24). Yet there is, either presciently or pre-experientially, something of the study already present in the researcher and this is true of the author who has invested a lifetime in trying to

understand the psychological and theological dimensions of the WCG phenomena as a lesson for religious experience, in general, and for individual spiritual transformation.

As presented in the disclaimer in Chapter 1, regarding preconditions for this present thesis, it is recognized (Outhwaite, 1985, p.25) that:

Traditional hermeneutic theory postulates a subject who aims to understand an object (a text, a social practice, or whatever) as it is in itself. This means that the subject must be as open-minded and unprejudiced as possible, approaching the object without any preconceptions. For Gadamer, by contrast, preconceptions or prejudices are what make understanding possible in the first place. They are bound up within our awareness of the historical influence or effectivity of the text: and without this awareness we would not understand it

Understanding is not a matter of forgetting our own horizon of meanings and putting ourselves within that of the alien text or the alien society; it means merging or fusing our own horizons with theirs.

Post-modern humanity's horizons are expanding and, since within the developmental perspective it is possible to anticipate individual mental expansion, any study of people's thinking requires an ongoing psychic journey with those being studied, ideally rendering any understanding of the other as a mutually authentic encounter. Following Dilthey's profound insights into the interdependence of self-knowledge and knowledge of other persons, and his quest for a psychologically infused historical methodology, Ricoeur (1981, p.49) is able to say:

Every human science ... presupposes a primordial capacity to transpose oneself into the mental life of others In the human order ... man knows man: however alien another man may be to us, he is not alien in the sense of an unknowable physical thing Man is not radically alien to man, because he offers signs of his existence. To understand these signs is to understand man.

Dilthey's quest was situated in history and this was taken up by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, now recognized as able to "establish a relational ontology at the heart of reality," and following Bonhoeffer's commitment to

experiencing truth in concrete reality, Zimmerman (2004, p.284) warns of falling “back into the subjectivist paradigm of idealism,” resulting from a denial of history – Bonhoeffer “refuses to sidestep the incarnation [of Christ] as if it were merely a consequence of the Trinity.” The idealism is faulted because “We begin to conjure up a world of thought made up of necessary metaphysical speculations, a harmonious totality where each part depends on the other” (ibid.) and this implies a perfection (self-sufficiency) that excludes what actually transpires in the world and between God and humanity.

In the matter of content analysis, especially the coding of text, “Inferential analysis is less concerned about the specifics of the data gathered for the study itself and more interested in what can be said about the phenomenon in general” (Geisler, 2004, p.xv). This invites a more interpretative approach, compatible with RCR, since “More contextually based systems of inquiry, based on a better developed understanding of the contextually bound nature of language, suggest that this reliance on external perspectives often misses much of importance in the human world” (p.xv). Furthermore:

A long tradition of work rooted in philosophy uses the insights of reason as a source of scholarly claims Very often the distinction between scholarly and empirical work is made based on the distinction between systematic method and intuitive analysis. These two distinctions are not, however, isomorphic our focus is on combining the insights of intuition with enough of the systematics of methodology to provide reasonable grounds for argument. (p.xvi).

The “privileged” role of the interpreter – as the “user” of intuition - then can be justified in Heidegger’s terms, as “we are not beings who ‘use’ symbols, but beings who are constituted by their use” (Lye, 1996, p.1). The interpreter must, in this way, already have in mind something of that which is to be understood. Therefore (p.2):

In order to “understand” one must “foreunderstand” {sic}, have a stance, an *anticipation* and a *contextualization*. This is what is known as the “hermeneutic circle”: one can only know what one is prepared to know, in the terms that one is prepared to know. The hermeneutic circle can be taken to be an innately

limiting, self-blinding process in which one only knows what one is prepared to know.

This is not to say that the “user” of a hermeneutic approach is incapable of an objective stance. It is really a matter of getting closer to that being studied. In the present thesis, it is not a matter of asking, How can one understand the WCG responses? – but, How do the WCG respondents understand themselves, or what they are saying, that makes sense to the author/reader? The researcher must bring their “horizon” in line with those being studied, just as there is this intimate encounter between text and reader. In this study, there is not only engagement with material texts but also the attempt by respondents to create their own meanings in relations to those texts. Lye (1996, p.3) puts it this way:

The reader’s horizon meets the text’s horizon: the reader reads with his/her understanding and frames of reference, but what he/she reads is a construct whose nuances and interrelations are governed by the horizons of the time of writing. Reading is thus tied to the text and its historicity; every reading is only an interpretation, and engagement of the historicity of the reader with the historicity of the text.

Regarding hermeneutic phenomenology, according to Gadamer, “we are always simultaneously part of the past, in the present, and anticipating the future.” Therefore, “This interpretive task is paradoxical: We let the text speak to us, yet we cannot understand it apart from our own prejudices and presuppositions” (Littlejohn, 1999, p.205). The “hermeneutic circle” is used – a text is interpreted by going from the general to the specific and then from the specific to the general. After looking at the composite meaning of the text, the specific linguistic features are examined. Therefore (p.207):

Within the circle, you always relate what is seen in the object to what you already know. You then alternate between a familiar set of concepts and the unfamiliar until the two merge in a tentative interpretation.

At a deeper philosophical level, it has been argued that “there is a core set of functions active within the process of meaning-constitution of perception and measurement that could be aptly called ‘transcendental,’ that is, as functioning universally in all human knowing of the world” (Heelan, 2003, p.3). It is useful to consider this in terms of the aptness of Reich’s theory, and the choice of methodology. Heelan (p.3) attempted to show “that measurement has the same functional structure as perception, and that this functional structure is like that of quantum theory,” and that “quantum theory is more like the ‘Manifest Image’ than the ‘Scientific Image’” – here the Manifest is based on perception, and the Scientific is based on measurement. What this points to is the need to apply methods that are consistent with the phenomenon; in this case, if perception was identified with insight, then *the revelation of that insight constitutes a valid form of measurement*. The empirical validity of this is assumed to be inherent in the approach.

Relevant to attempts to explain a complementarity-defined view of the Trinity, is this statement by Heelan (2003, p.15):

There is, however, one exception to the formal parallelism between the structure of consciousness and that of quantum theory: human decision-making can freely and deliberately choose among the operant intentions while in physical nature quantum outcomes are stochastic. The *uncertainty* is removed when the subject chooses to direct attention to one of the possible complementary outcomes of the flux to the exclusion of the others. The choice may destroy or at least impair the immediate possibility of addressing within intentional consciousness a complementary flux associated with a complementary object.

The danger, in Trinitarian terms, is that it is possible to fixate on any of the constituents (Father, Son or Holy Spirit) to the exclusion of the others or even to so “hypostasize” them that plurality is turned into polytheism. It is apparent that *uncertainty* of these relations is essential to the concept’s viability. Heelan (p.18) argues that his “conclusion agrees better with Bohr’s contention that the domain of the quantum theory reveals for the first time the normal structure of human consciousness.”

4.1.2 RCR approach to the problem

As the WCG situation involves explanations beyond the reach of conventional science, that is, the WCG attributes its transformation to spiritual intervention, it is difficult to deal with the methodology conventionally. The entire phenomenon studied cannot be quantified, controlled or repeated, but the RCR approach at least gives us a connection to the human reasoning used by the WCG to account for its transformation. Rather than searching for “spiritual” answers, this task involves acknowledging the “human spirit” dimension of reasoning. The “higher” levels of reasoning – as presented by most psychological “stage” theorists, and accepted in principle by mainstream psychology – do indeed involve broader and non-quantifiable, if not transcendental, ways of thinking and being (Helminiak, 1987, *passim*). The non-quantitative nature of human reasoning does not preclude its scientific characterization and investigation, nor does it, *a fortiori*, require appeal to the so-called “transcendental.” This is supported by Michell (2004, p.317), who argues that “there is nothing intrinsically unscientific about the use of qualitative methods in psychology, as far as the traditional, realist understanding of science is concerned.”

In this, there is a search for “adequacy” in methodology, and Davis (1997, p.1) suggests that “The essence of this approach is an integration of complementary scientific approaches, a ‘methodological pluralism’.” This, indeed, sits well with the Reichian perspective, as the present thesis’ focus is not on the causes of the WCG transformation but, rather, the form of reasoning that enabled it to occur and that was supposedly involved in its occurrence. According to Davis (1997, p.1):

This approach challenges the limiting assumptions and practices of conventional science without rejecting its deepest values, including valuing truth over dogma and careful critical analysis over bias. Similarly, it challenges the notion that spiritual experience is completely beyond empirical analysis.

Davis (1997, p.1) continues:

Calls for an expanded approach to science which can include study of the human spirit are not new. For example, in the early 1900’s, William James, the first

American psychologist, included the study of consciousness and religious experience in the subject matter of psychology while advocating and practicing a thoroughly empirical approach.

Davis (1997, p.1) advocates that “the questions asked in scientific research guide the choice of methods.” In the present thesis, the central question is qualitative – how can the WCG transformation be understood, given the uncertainty of information available? Methodological pluralism actually calls for a range of methods (some quantitative if necessary) that together, and in context, might illuminate the question. This is a kind of triangulation. In the present thesis, the question cannot easily be approached using established methods but *the RCR theory itself provides its inherent methodology*. Whether that is adequate for the task is also under consideration. In Reich’s work, the investigation of complementarity thinking seems to have been approached by a kind of complementarity thinking-based methodology; in Reich’s work, as in Marshall McLuhan’s, the medium is the message (or the explanation demonstrates the method). Again, whether or not this works remains to be seen. Davis (1997, p.1) cites Bevan’s (1991, p.480) advice:

Be wary of rule bound methodology. Use any method with a full understanding of what it does for you but also what constraints it may place on you, and whether it violates assumptions about the phenomena that you are studying. Free yourself of the worry that you are behaving badly if you don’t use officially certified scientific methodology.

Davis (1997) recognizes the value of a complementarity-based approach, drawing on physics. Following Rychlak (1993), such an approach would involve several (non-compatible) methods, whatever they may be, so that “Complementarity points to the role of each perspective in adding what is missing in any single perspective” (Davis 1997, p.1). In this case, complementarity involves each perspective complementing another; Reich does this, but there is more to it. RCR involves a consideration of the complementarity inherent in the phenomenon under study, not just complementarity between methods of studying that phenomenon. In the case of the Trinity, for example, it is assumed that the concept is akin to complementarity, in the Trinity’s nature and functioning. To understand the Trinity therefore requires an “insight” into that

complementarity. In relation to those asked to explain the Trinity, the method therefore is to explore whether or not complementarity thinking is being used. Reich's theory asserts that such thinking is indeed necessary. To be able to think about a complementarity-based phenomenon without the capacity to think in a complementary way goes against the indications of Reich's thesis.

The methodology being sought, therefore, is one that is capable of determining whether or not someone exposed to the doctrine of the Trinity can think in terms of complementarity, and at what level (in Reich's RCR schema), as Reich asserts that someone is more likely to comprehend the Trinity the higher the RCR level. Reich's theory somewhat blurs the difference between "thinking in terms of complementarity" and the level of that thinking, since it is necessary to avoid an either/or outcome for that inquiry. The RCR scale commences at a proto-complementarity level, then moves in stages towards full complementarity. Presumably there is a threshold stage, but a deeper understanding of the concept of Trinity is attainable only at the higher stages. This does not preclude the potential for higher RCR levels, discernible in the lower levels. Along with the identification of a stage where a full complementarist way of thought is applied to a particular phenomenon, there is the assumption that such a way of thinking is transferable to other complex phenomena, indeed that the person will be inclined to perceive complex and paradoxical phenomena and questions along those lines. That is why, in the present thesis, there is interest in whether or not the attainment of complementarity thinking re the Trinity had anything to do with a different understanding of other doctrines.

How adequate is this approach? Davis (1997, p.1) says that "The notion of adequacy suggests research methods that are equal to the task of understanding, are responsive to the nature of the subject matter, and are open to critical evaluation." As explained in Chapter 2, there is a reasonable "fit" between RCR and the doctrine of the Trinity so this line of investigation can be justified. Davis (1997) recommends Lincoln and Guba's criteria of accuracy, consistency and neutrality when evaluating the outcomes of such research. An accurate result, in a topic like this, would involve "describing the deep structure or pattern of an experience or phenomenon in a way that is faithful to the experience" (Davis, 1997, p.1). The Trinity doctrine is explained in

terms of complementarity thinking elsewhere in the present thesis, as a benchmark for considering how WCG leaders think about this question.

Consistency and reliability is difficult to achieve in unique investigations, but Davis (1997) suggests “auditability” as a suitable control. The present thesis is not an exact replication of Reich’s procedures, neither is it likely that this study will be exactly replicated by others, but the procedures can be adequately explained and the source material can be reviewed. Should others follow this path, full agreement on how the phenomenon should be interpreted is highly unlikely, but the value of the research will be expressed in a deeper understanding through dialogue between researchers (and those being researched.)

Neutrality in such studies is nigh impossible to achieve, as strict controls are unavailable. The approach and the materials call for a stance of some kind, but this needs to be revealed in the discussion. Participants are highly involved and interested in the study, but Davis (1997) allows that the value of the research can be confirmed “in terms of their depth, richness, usefulness, and faithfulness to informants’ experiences.” In this present study, the process of change and its consequences has been a very emotional issue; the application of a cognitive schema on the case study has been selective. “Cognitive dissonance” has not been pursued as the main element (even though the term has been offered by participants as a part of their experience), as it seems to be part of the conflict involved in the process of change. *RCR seems to be a more neutral option as it deals with rational processes rather than emotive ones.* RCR could go a step further, as a potential way of resolving cognitive dissonance. Indeed, as participant reactivity is to be expected in a case like this, the research intention was to allow for reflection on the questions rather than inducement of emotions. In fact, this study appears to have enlivened interest in the Trinity by the WCG participants, expressed through further ministerial education and literature for members. This must be perceived by the participants to be a positive outcome of their reflection on the topic being researched.

Davis (1999) affirms the need for strong pre-empirical research. That includes clarifying the meaning of the concepts used in the research, and that has been a formidable task in the present thesis as it relates to the intricacies of Trinitarian doctrine

and, especially, RCR as an uncertain formulation. Methodological issues flowing from this have had to be dealt with in terms of the unusualness of these concepts. Likewise, the participant pool and ethical issues have presented unusual challenges. From this starting point, the task has been one of educating theory grounded in these conditions, in an attempt to interpret the engagement of RCR as an approach and emerging theory with an enigmatic case study. Yet the traditional qualitative methods need to be adapted to the unusual conditions in this study. A type of naturalistic inquiry or hermeneutic analysis is involved, but mostly in the context of exploring RCR's peculiar operation. As suggested by Davis (and also Reich, *passim*), in this approach the questions lead to methods. It has been necessary to tease out of the RCR domain a credible type of methodology that is consistent with the RCR paradigm. It is a matter of being faithful to the phenomena being researched, whilst providing richer and deeper descriptions of the elements. As Davis (1999, p.1) says, "There are many qualitative methods and no set 'recipe'." On the basis that this is not an experimental thesis, precise and testable hypotheses are not feasible (Davis 1999). In this case, Reich's suggestion of a research heuristic, dealing with an "explanandum," has been followed.

The complexity of this approach, in the complex world of religion, requires a special kind of psychological synthesis. According to J.S. Jensen (2002, p.203):

Cognition sets the limits and boundary conditions for the social, cultural and religious activities of humans in thought and action. Thus, cognitive studies and theorizing are crucial contributions to the explanation and understanding of social, cultural and religious activities, for cognition is the 'basic stuff' – individual and universal – upon which humanly constructed worlds become possible as higher-order phenomena.

RCR, like other developmental theories, indeed takes into account thinking at higher levels. Whilst Reich's theory is psychological, it takes into account much more as the horizon of what relates to the human mind expands, to incorporate social, cultural, ecological, and spiritual dimensions. Jensen (2002, p.205), in respect of such approaches, says "Normatively speaking, studies in the human sciences become the more informative, richer and interesting, when supplying multi-dimensional information, and such 'thick descriptions' are inevitably linked to 'thick theorizing'."

Referring to Karl Popper's "World 3" – of objective knowledge or of meaning (compared to "World 1" – physical, and "World 2" - mental), Jensen (p.212) suggests that "The problems concerning the interrelations and interactions between these worlds can be handled through the notion of 'supervenience'. The 'world of meaning' will then be seen as an emergent or 'supervenient' ... world upon the mental and physical worlds."

The linking of psychology and religion, conversion and belief, theory and method, requires a complex set of variables. According to a cognitive-based approach to religion (Jensen, 2002, p.217), "Explanations link things ('explananda') in epistemologically salient orders, and they are, therefore, syntax-sensitive. The 'things' they so order are either other explanations or interpretations." Therefore "Explanatory systems are employed in organizing types of meaning and explanation, not so much through direct procedures of induction or deduction but rather as a backdrop for abduction and abductive processes of reasoning" (p.217). This will be taken up below, but the subjectivity of this approach is not without its practical necessities. According to Jensen (p.225):

Religion, culture and cognition are mutually reflexive and inter-connected levels of explanations. They come together because that is the only way they work. Cultural context is not just something historically specific; it is what our general humanness is made of. That is because we do not understand things "as they are" – we only understand by "re-creating" them, in images and in narratives that follow the rules and build upon the properties of our minds.

O'Connor (2004) applies "unreconstructed logic," to refer to "the quality, meaning, context, or image of reality in what people actually do, not what they say they do." It uses "grounded theory, built from the ground up." In the present thesis, there is a kind of logic already presupposed – that is, complementarity logic as opposed to Aristotelian. The RCR theory is itself a type of superimposed (supervenient?) paradigm, grounded in its own assumptions. Yet it is very difficult to apply directly. There seems to be a need for the objects of analysis to be grounded in the RCR theory. That is, the Trinity doctrine is thought to be grounded in complementarity. Therefore to analyse statements about the Trinity, it is necessary to assume that complementarity will be (or

should be) the basis for such analysis. The circularity of this argument is clear (potentially the fallacy of *circulus in demonstrado* applies to Reich's theory, as it is applied to the Trinitarian analysis.) But this could be acceptable if the hermeneutical process is acknowledged as being recursive.

The present thesis involves a special kind of content analysis. *Reich appears to be using his RCR scale as a coding scheme as well.* In the case study, especially in reference to the Trinity, a level of RCR in regard to the Trinity is sought in the literature studied and the survey responses. It is the "how" of these responses that provides the raw material for assessing the statements in terms of their relation to the RCR scale. Analysis relies on the interpreter's proficient use of "latent coding," indeed tacit knowledge that relies on pre-existing knowledge of the topic (the Trinity) and the respondent's prior and current explanations of the topic. According to O'Connor (2004, p.5), this "involves the researcher using some rubric or template to make judgment calls in implicit, ironic, or doubtful content." In this study, the researcher is familiar with WCG theological developments and RCR principles. The difficult task is bringing those bases together to demonstrate their relationship.

Olson (1995, p.2) asserts that, to clarify the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches, it is necessary to deal with the ontological and epistemological assumptions. Regarding qualitative methods, these can be "holistic, environmental, or contextual; inductive or dialectical; pluralistic or relative; and its involvement with the object of the research." This involves assumptions about reality, and "methodology develops from the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance." In this case, the same can be said of the respondents. If the present thesis were solely an attempt to validate Reich's RCR theory, then it would not take into account what arises out of an attempt to test the theory; but that outcome itself is theoretical, therefore "in subjective research, theory may be generated by the evidence during the study" (Olson 1995, p.3).

There is an inherent difficulty with this search for an adequate methodology for the present thesis. An objectivist approach might require the Trinity doctrine to be expressed in concrete terms, but that would destroy its inherent characteristics as a result of reification (or a kind of "hard" *hypostatization*, which would be ironic and aberrational in terms of the subtle, undetermined and free relations believed to be in

the life of the Trinity). It would also contra-indicate a suitable level of RCR in the exponent. A totally subjectivist approach would suggest multiple realities in the Trinity, but that would be at the expense of the concept's integrity. All this assumes that there is an agreed-upon understanding of the concept against which other versions could be compared. At the heart of this matter is the need to find a method of determining whether or not a respondent can explain the concept in terms of complementarity, based on the assumption that the concept (the Trinity) can only be satisfactorily explained this way. If the explanation lacks defining characteristics of complementarity (or at least a high enough level of RCR) then the explanation would be deemed deficient (devoid of RCR, or at a low RCR level).

Huber, Reich and Schenker (2000) open up methodological pathways to demonstrate the linkages in the present study. The authors recommend (p.1) that we must ask "What is the status of the research?" in any field of inquiry. There are several possibilities: a "beginning in uncharted territory," the "testing of tentative hypotheses," and using/improving extent theories.

What is to be investigated, mostly is not a directly observable attribute, but a psychological <<construct>>, a mental <<model>> of the phenomenon under study. As the construct cannot be observed directly, the task consists in collecting appropriate data which permit to test it by way of deduction and/or retrodution (abduction) [sic] (p.2)

The paper (Huber, Reich and Schenker, 2000) presents accounts of types of methodology – Huber's use of quantitative repertory grids, Schenker's use of questionnaire design, and Reich's use of qualitative interviewing. Reich accounts for how the interview technique is useful in the study of religious development. He uses a problem-oriented approach, but admits that "Basically, it is an impossible task" (p.3). Regarding the technique, "What is wanted are answers which translate the interviewee's own knowledge, judgement, and relevant competence." But the risk is that interviewees will:

- (1) say anything which comes to mind to shorten the interview (including "fantasizing")

- (2) say what is assumed will please the interviewer
- (3) parrot what is official thinking – rehash written accounts
- (4) present what puts them in a good light (that is, an inauthentic response – to look “orthodox”)
- (5) play games, obfuscate, or be guarded (be suspicious of motives)

Indeed, some of these problems will be become apparent in the analysis of Worldwide Church of God leaders’ written responses to questions on their adoption of the Trinity doctrine. There was no opportunity to test such responses in the context of a follow-up interview.

In starting new research to discover if there was a systematic progression of thought (worldview), Reich (Huber, Reich & Schenker, 2000) used a “critical incident” technique, followed by testing tentative hypotheses. In effect, Reich claims that there is a correlation between prevailing worldviews into which children are socialized, and where they start with their views in terms of their developmental capacities. However, as general worldviews evolve (or their social context changes), so do children’s (in step with these changes). To discover what those worldviews were, structured interviews were devised to guide respondents down that path (rather than away from it). Once that path was discovered (with a pre-test question), a suitable questionnaire was administered. To make sense of this, it was necessary to take into account established theories. Reich (Huber, Reich, & Schenker, 2000, p.6) refers to stages – from Fowler (faith) and Oser and Gmünder (religious judgement) - as “measuring process,” in which “an unknown ‘quantity’ is compared to a standard.” Reich says “Given the complexity of these constructs, one specialised standard per stage is required rather than a single unit standard for all stages” (as interval scales are not involved). Thus:

for each stage a detailed description and a number of standard interview answers are provided, with which the interviewee’s actual answers are compared. Consonance between the two translates as identification of the interviewee’s stageDuring the interview, the interviewee’s cognitive structure is explored via questioning his or her initial answers; this from the perspective of a more developed stage ...

Therefore, for the sake of testing Reich's approach, information is needed about a person's actual thinking in terms of complementarity (RCR) and, if RCR is detectable, at what Level the person is operating. Even if the person shows signs of "lower" level RCR thinking, they are still part of the scale-set. It appears from Reich's writings that all thinking potentially has RCR characteristics, but here is the difference: RCR is mostly concerned with and comparable to the higher stages of Piaget (possibly also of Kohlberg, Fowler, Oser and Gmünder). It would be a matter of discarding lower examples of thinking in respondents, and concentrating on the higher, the only concern being the identification of distinctions between the upper levels, and noting how the thinking operates at each of these.

4.1.3 Reich's heuristic for approaching problems

This section deals with why RCR is a relevant tool for studying the transformation of WCG leaders in terms of the Trinity doctrine. It also addresses the qualifications a researcher needs to successfully deal with the multiple complexities involved. It is Reich's contention that the approach to dealing with a problem should match the characteristics of the problem. For this reason, Reich's approach involves an eight step heuristic (see 4.1.4, below) that attempts to engage with the problem in a multidisciplinary way. This is based on the idea that many strands of several theories are interrelated, indeed complement one another, so that any inquiry utilizing multiple perspectives should result in a more holistic outcome. This approach is already prompted by the existence of several parallel stage theories of human development. Although each strand has its own purposes and value, the interrelations are apparent. In this general sense of the word "complementarity," the objective is to harmonize various approaches.

In general, complementarity is not only useful for integrating various lines of inquiry but also particularly useful for dealing with the intra-relationships in a problem or problematic construct. There are paradoxes within ideas as well as between them, and an approach that can deal with both layers extends the inquirer's capacity to understand the whole picture, as it were. Based on the specific character of complementarity in quantum physics, Reich's theory is extended to the paradoxical and assumed contradictory aspects of constructs and problems. This "molecular" structure of links

between problems, and within the character of each constituent, is actually a way of dealing with an entirely new paradigm. The concretized model then gives way to relationality as the basis for all reality, although structures of relations – identified in their contextual manifestations – would provide models of what has been, now exists, and what is emerging.

Reich's heuristic points to, but does not actually produce, a set of criteria for applying the heuristic within a compatible framework. The larger scope for this is in the area of worldview transformation, whereas a detailed examination of structural and conceptual change would demonstrate development in the structural relations, possibly marked by progression through various stages. Reich's heuristic parallels other stage theorists by concentrating its project into a set of relations which depend on contextual factors for their realization. In the case of cognitive development, the theory expresses itself as relational and contextual reasoning.

The model for this entails two major considerations: Is the thought being examined operative in a complementarist manner, or not? Or is it operating in progressively more complex ways? The first consideration invites an either/or response. Either the reasoning is complementarist or it is not. To consider Reich's basic level in this polarized form is to truncate its potential for development. That is why RCR Level 1 might be best thought of as an early stage of more complex reasoning, which might be open to development should the problems, or the contexts, vary.

The question then moves from, Is this person thinking in RCR terms or not? (or even capable of RCR) to, At what stage of RCR is this person thinking? (and what are the prospects of development?) Except in cases of arrested development, it is sensible to expect that adults are capable of more than binary thinking. However, most pragmatic exigencies require limited extensions to primary thinking, and transcendental thought is limited to the "poetic" expressions of consciousness. It is not denied in Reich's theory that most human thought is capable of operation at various levels. In ordinary circumstances, a "sufficient" number of variables are taken into account, related to the practicalities of the situation or the complexity of the problem.

Despite the problems of assimilating Reichian and Piagetian theory, it may be assumed that all humans, through natural development, are capable of higher thinking. It is then only a matter of stimulating the movement towards higher levels, perhaps by extending relational boundaries and by encouraging openness to novel situational determinants. In other words, as relationality and contextual sensitivity is fostered, humans may benefit from the advantages of higher level thought. These benefits include understanding and coping with paradoxical situations, and opening up new horizons for self-realization and problem solving, especially in conflicting situations. This is the grand vision of Reich's theory, and its application (apart from inspiring hope for a pluralistic approach to life and the world's challenges) calls for at least two conditions.

Firstly, the practitioner needs to comprehend the reasoning undergirding the theory and be able to reflect proactively in terms of the higher levels. Secondly, the practitioner must be able to translate the characteristics of each stage – and the respective connections between them – into workable solutions. In part, this is a matter for intuitive judgment, cultivated in a responsible professional way, lest a rigid checklist of expectations stifle the potential of the method. In the main, however, the RCR theory involves a form of cognitive calculus, requiring more than subjective intuitions. It requires rules for understanding and interpreting complex phenomena, and is therefore a significant hermeneutical task. This involves more than reverberating through the complex minutia of problem cases. To be sure, the connections between evident and/or otherwise cached elements calls for detailed examination, but the hermeneutical circle involves the practitioner bringing pre-judgment to the phenomenon as well as evoking signification in terms of the interpretant (following Peirce's semiotics).

The application of RCR to situations of multiple complexity, and layers of paradox, is undoubtedly its intended purpose. This is exactly what was available in the case study of the Worldwide Church of God, a sect that became a respected church by applying a new paradigm of liberty using (and apparently continuing to use) mindsets and authoritarian measures intrinsic to the superseded paradigm. The matter of conversion, its antecedents and further developments, can be applied to the later evaluation of the WCG.

4.1.4 Heuristic as methodology

Reich's methodology, as expounded in *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Reich, 2002b), appears to be in the form of an applied heuristic (see **Appendix A** and Reich 1991, p.79; 2002b, p.103). Once RCR is understood as a way of dealing with the complementarity of paradox and conundrum, in terms of the schema summarized in Paloutzian (1996, p.123), its systematic application follows eight steps, beginning with the selection of an "explanandum." Reich's complementarity or RCR heuristic, listed below in *italics*, is described in relation to the main concerns of the present thesis and background matters. To this have been added comments that might relate to the explanandum. In this case, it is asked "Can cognitive processes necessarily, albeit insufficiently, account for the transformation of the Worldwide Church of God?"

(1) *"Clarifying and defining the phenomenon to be described or explained."*

This is a general device. The present thesis is about how a marginal sect (WCG) changed its thinking, particularly about a particular doctrine (The Trinity), and how the features of that doctrine (according to Reich's theory) require complementarity reasoning (or RCR), leading to the conjecture that RCR was necessary for the change to be consistent with the appropriate form of logic. A secondary aspect is the cognitive dissonance that might arise if traces of the old belief are held concurrently with the new belief, or as a sign that the adoption of the Trinity belief was not based on logical comprehension. This step involves identification of the "functionally coherent whole." In this case, it is a comprehensive view of the Worldwide Church of God.

(2) *"Listing all descriptions and explanations A,B,C, ...from different categories, even if they are to be considered incompatible, incommensurable, and so on by the ambient culture, and possibly adding new ones and dealing with any conflicts rising."*

Included can be questions about the WCG, its leaders, and doctrinal change – particularly the Trinity. This step involves identification of the theories or explanations that might be applied to this case study. Areas of interest are –

(a) *Spiritual/theological.* Ordinarily a theological dimension would not be admitted to a study like this, but this is not to deny its interest to those affected by the changes. The matters of “divine intervention” or “spiritual maturity” are capable of being used as explanations of reality. This is an area where the supernatural is expected to be active, although humanistic transcendentalism is also possible (Helminiak, 1987). Ultimately, the WCG attributes its change to the Holy Spirit. Reference can be made to Fowler (2000), Peace (1999), and Smith (2001), analyses that combine theological and psychological insights. The importance of better technical knowledge (of biblical languages, textual exegesis, church history) cannot be discounted because the material is “theological”.

(b) *Sociological.* Was the WCG’s change the result of religious organizational development stages (Troeltsch, 1931; Dent, 1970), including departure of charismatic leadership? Several WCG leaders have submitted Doctor of Ministry dissertations along these lines (for example, Feazell, 1999). Many attribute the possibility of change to the death of the sect founder, Herbert W. Armstrong, around whom a powerful cult of personality had formed. Reference can be made to Bromley (1988), Gillespie (1991), Rambo (1993), and sources on fundamentalism.

(c) *Psychological.* Was the WCG’s change the result of other kinds of development, some of which are cognitively-based? This would involve stage theorists such as Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson. Coincidentally, Reich’s RCR theory has stage characteristics. Reference should be made to Oser and Gmünder (1991) and Reich’s extensive writings, and also to Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance (1956) and Lonergan’s treatise on understanding (1973).

(3) *“Establishing under which circumstances A(B,C,...) describes or explains particular aspects of the phenomenon, and, in case a genuine understanding does not come forth, reconsidering A(B,C,...) as an approximation or even only as an analogy.”*

In regard to the Trinity, descriptions should be sought of the anti-position and the pro-position, as well as the individual “Persons.” It is important to ascertain how the WCG and its leaders differ as to the past and the reasons for these differences. This step

involves consideration of the co-extensiveness of the above perspectives and approaches. It is apparent that the case study can be approached from several directions and all would make a contribution. The question is, to what degree, and how compatible might these be? This indicates the need for methodological pluralism.

- (4) *“Discovering or describing any (unexpected) links between the different descriptions or explanations, in particular, bringing out (unsuspected) common attributes or coinherences.”*

It is anticipated that the logic of RCR is needed to understand the logic of the Trinity. If the WCG leaders think in terms of RCR now, it is necessary to establish that this is the reason for their believing in the Trinity doctrine at present. However, if the WCG leaders hold to the Trinity doctrine without the benefit of RCR, it may be necessary to inquire if there is any underlying cognitive dissonance, or even to consider that Reich's theory has not correctly been applied or may be flawed. This step involves contextualization of the explanandum: exactly what is to be studied, and from what perspective. How would these approaches contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the “problem”? Each approach may be contextualized, in that each has something to contribute to some aspect of the problem, as well as to its overall explanation.

To attempt this, reference can be made to Reich's earlier writing where a “functionally coherent unit” is more manageable within the whole. The WCG's adoption of the doctrine of the Trinity has been selected, especially because the doctrine itself is said to be amenable to explication by the RCR heuristic. As such, the doctrine is the specific test case for the larger problem. Its adoption involves problems for the WCG, and it does so because the doctrine is inherently problematic. Thus the problem theme contains elements of both problem structure and content.

The problem is further contextualized into phases, so that the early doctrinal (as well as worldview) positions can be analysed and compared to later transitional and clarified positions. The old belief was anti-Trinitarian, based on an idiosyncratic theory of the nature of God. That period can be examined in terms of authoritarian, inflexible mindsets. The transitional period was marked by uncertainty, confusion, and dissent.

The more recent period apparently is settled within orthodoxy, but traces of earlier thinking (not excluding authoritarianism) are in evidence.

- (5) *“Assessing to what extent the relative (proportional) explanatory contribution of each mode depends on the current strength of the other mode(s) (as distinct from a contribution described by a fixed relationship).”*

The Trinity is an essential Christian doctrine because it incorporates belief in the deity of Christ. If the Holy Spirit must be given the status of co-equal Person, as a definite logical relationship necessitated by the characteristics of the other Two Persons, this might validate a tri-unity concept, otherwise a “Binitarian” conceptualization could be satisfactory (Letham, 2004). This step involves consideration of the links between the various positions on the doctrine of the Trinity (in respect of the phases from opposition to adoption), and how these contributed to the WCG’s own understanding of its transformation. By “own” is meant responses and reactions by members to the changes, as well as the reflections on the change process by those most responsible for it. Simply put, this would involve matching spiritual and other explanations for the same event, and inquiring into the possibility of co-extensive applications or competing (non compatible) explanations.

- (6) *“Working out an overarching synopsis or theory that explains the various features of the reference object or state of affairs with regard to different circumstances and situations.”*

This is a general explication of the Trinity, but its application to the WCG and its leaders needs further examination. This step extends the last point, where there is an attempt to appraise the relative explanatory power of each position – alone, and in relation to others. This is an ambitious, if not exhausting, task. The mathematical scales or rules of weighting have not been developed, so this remains an intellectual, interpretive task.

- (7) *“Explaining any shifts in meaning of the concepts needed to explain the phenomenon, its modes, and the new synopsis or theory.”*

The WCG's change to the Trinity may simply be a semantic shift. It is necessary to inquire if RCR does produce such a shift, so that what is paradoxical suddenly "makes sense." In the Aristotelean sense, a logical contradiction can be "resolved" by altering the meaning of one of the terms, although that simply shifts the ground to different propositions. Regarding the Trinity, there may be a redefinition of words, in this case relating to the word Person. If "Person" can be applied to the Holy Spirit, without damaging the understanding of how the Holy Spirit operates, or falling into tritheism, and putting aside theories of pagan origins of the belief, then there should be no impediment to giving some credibility to the orthodox Trinity belief. In other words, the doctrine could be believable. But if belief in the believability of an idea is the same as believing it, then this may not be a genuine belief in the idea's reference. This is a summarizing step, perhaps providing a synoptic explanation of the phenomenon. Some indication might be given of alternative assessments of the case study, much as what would happen if a prism's angles were altered to provide a different perspective. Perhaps this could be expressed in hypothetical statements such as, "in this light, the WCG's adoption of the Trinity is a sign of spiritual maturity and renouncement of past heresy," but "in this other light, the Trinity change is part of an overall change process that entails inconsistencies and uncertainty about a settled identity for the WCG."

- (8) The final stage is obscurant and will not be addressed in the present thesis.

Reich suggests there may be semantic shifts that could affect the way the explanandum is resolved, but this could be placed earlier in the process. Reich's words are: "*explaining any shifts in the meaning of the concepts needed to explain the explanandum, A, B, C ..., and the new synopsis or theory.*" At the earlier stages, it is possible that the problem is understood differently once the semantic elements are clarified. But it is also possible that the problem is not truly resolved because *only* semantic shifts are implemented. The WCG places some weight on "paradigm shift" to explain its transformation, and also seeks to maintain continuity between old and new beliefs by claiming that in some instances the differences are due mainly to semantics. Kearns (2000) shows that semantics involves more than the superficial meaning of words and that the inherent polysemy of many expressions allows for a range of meanings (some non-compatible) to co-exist. Thus a "change" in meaning may well be

movement to another phase, or possibility, in the term which might not have been apparent without its re-contextualization.

In his demonstration of the RCR heuristic (which is contextualized in the religion-science interface), Reich utilizes Barbour's categories of (a) conflict, (b) independence, (c) dialogue, and (d) integration. These categories are operative in the context of the WCG's transformation. It is apparent that Reich's 5 point scale (Reich, 2002b, p.52) (**Appendix B**) is partially isomorphic with his 4 point model drawn from Barbour (Reich, 2002b, p.121) (**Appendix C**). It is best applied to the two Natures of Christ question in that it deals with the relationship of A and B. If a third element, C, were introduced (to relate to the Trinity), the model remains useful. Reich (2002b, p.110) interprets Barbour's categories in terms of RCR level. Conflict would be at Level I, Independence at Level II, Dialogue at Level III or IV, and Integration at Level V. Reich also suggests that progress from II to III may not be just developmental. Conscious decision or commitment may be needed. In fact, it is clear how Reich may have used the limited model to supplement his elaborate 5 point scale when considering the Trinity question. However, Barbour's scheme will be used analogically (rather than being applied to science-religion relations, it is applied to WCG-world relations) as a background consideration.

4.2 Methodological Context

4.2.1 The Trinity as context for applying RCR

The present thesis deals with the application of Reich's RCR approach to materials and responses by WCG officials, in order to ascertain the extent to which Reich's theory might explain any change of thinking on the part of WCG officials in the transformation of their doctrine, particularly regarding Trinitarianism. As indicated in chapter 1, the doctrine of the Trinity was selected because Reich refers to this as an exemplar of RCR, and also because this doctrinal change might have been *pivotal* to the WCG's transformation (Lapacka, 2001, p.275).

The possibility exists that RCR was present in old, transitional and current WCG positions re the Trinity. However, Reich's theory would require (despite traces of RCR being present in the non-Trinitarian position) an elevation of RCR thinking (in terms of higher levels) in the case of an explanation of full Trinitarian belief. This returns to the problem of whether RCR may be considered as a threshold capacity (which renders it an either/or determination) or a continuum along which higher levels of understanding are possible. It is in the explanations proffered by the various periods of WCG teaching that a sign of RCR thinking should be found. The possibility also exists that - notwithstanding the expectation of higher order RCR thinking in full Trinitarianism - the current exponents of the doctrine are not operating at the RCR levels expected. In that case, the theory needs further clarification and development. For example, if belief in the Trinity is taken as *prima facie* evidence of some RCR capacity, this does not exclude the possibility that RCR was present in a dormant state prior to belief in the Trinity. Obviously, understanding of the Trinity without any RCR capacity disappoints Reich's expectations, if it does not falsify his theory. On the other hand, the possibility exists that the adopters of the doctrine have done so for reasons other than cognitive development. Should that be the case, it should lead to a re-evaluation of Reich's theory.

If RCR is minimally present in WCG leaders responsible for initiating and promoting doctrinal change, particularly in regards to the Trinity, then it has to be asked, How has the thinking of the WCG leaders actually changed? There may be a different content, or semantic transformation, but how is "transformation" to be understood in this process? If transformation is a kind of conversion and involves more than superficial changes, and in fact requires a new way of thinking (on the part of individuals), in what way are the current WCG leaders "transformed"? The present thesis aims at an understanding (*Verstehen*) rather than a complete explanation (*Erklären*) of this phenomenon (MacDonald & Pettit, 1981, p.55). In terms of methodology, a number of approaches were available.

The transformation of the WCG does entail organizational and corporate innovations, but a change of thinking and personality properly resides in individuals. To a great extent, the WCG changes were initiated and promoted by a select group of individuals. It is impossible to discover how the members at large really think, except to

note that more than half disagreed with the WCG's leaders' introduction of change (Russell, 1997) and anecdotal evidence reveals that some continuing members have not relinquished their earlier beliefs. So it is the thinking of the WCG leaders, the change agents, with which we are concerned. This is not about any spiritual conversion, a condition inaccessible to direct analysis, but about the presence and evolution of RCR thinking as a dimension in the introduction of Trinitarian thinking.

Reich (2002b, p.124) sought "to find out whether respondents arguing at a higher RCR level about the three standard nonreligious problems would understand the doctrine of the Trinity better than respondents who argued at a lower RCR level." In the present thesis, all respondents were familiar with arguments for and against the Trinity, and therefore were not naïve subjects. From an examination of earlier anti-Trinity writings, it was not clear that these respondents would have necessarily thought about the Trinity in an entirely black or white way. It is apparent that a high level of intelligence had been applied, even though a very different conclusion has now been reached about the same material. That is, previous thinking was not so simplistic that it could not have led to the present conclusions. The WCG leaders refer to "paradigm changes," and most accounts imply a preliminary period where existing paradigms had become unsustainable, followed by gradual (or even sudden) awareness of a switch in gestalt (consistent with Kuhn, 1980). The role of leadership is also relevant, especially since the WCG leaders found themselves spanning old and new paradigms, and required "cognitive authority and control" (Barnes, 1982, p.9).

In Reich's study, it was found that "the understanding of the doctrine correlated with RCR (sub-) levels" (Reich, 2002b, p.124) but there is no way that Reich's study could have been replicated or used as a bench-mark for this study, especially since his sample was very small and changed during the study, and the eventual interpretations of respondent's statements was evidently subjective. These limitations are admitted by Reich (p.125) and he concludes that:

The main finding of both studies on the intelligibility of Christian doctrines is that *RCR appears to be a necessary but insufficient condition for an intellectually acceptable understanding of the doctrines studied*. Specific knowledge and interest (motivation) are needed in addition if the potential

competence is to show up in the actual performance [emphasis and underlining added.]

What this admits is that a certain level of RCR is a necessary starting point. However, Reich's scale (**Appendix B**; Reich, 2002b, p.52; Paloutzian,1996, p.123) describes Level 1 in such a way that that renders it pre-RCR. Therefore, Reich's assertion about the Trinity study must apply to RCR level 2 at least. However, from the complexity of the topic (Trinity), it would be more accurate to say that an understanding of the Trinity at Level 2 must be barely adequate, as it seems that the higher (if not the highest) RCR levels are more appropriate for the topic. Obviously, at the lower to middle levels of RCR, understanding of the Trinity would be adequate but not very developed, and probably sustained by extrinsic factors. It is possible that the sufficiency would increase as the highest RCR level is approached.

The higher RCR levels of necessity entail greater knowledge of alternatives, and complex relationships within and between concepts, so that as a totality of these elements the highest level of RCR would be deemed sufficient. The contrary argument would ask, What kind of knowledge is needed for such understanding? In this case, the answer would be: Historical and theological knowledge appropriate to the Trinity, in particular a "correct" understanding of the Chalcedonian creed of the "two natures of Christ." In the present thesis, mainstream orthodox Christian doctrine is taken as being the standard view. Despite the arbitrary nature of this decision, it is justified in terms of its comparative value and wide historical acceptance. This matter is complicated in the WCG case study because, although the WCG apparently had a non-standard doctrine of Christ, in regard to the Trinity it seems to have become orthodox because of advances in its understanding of Christology. That is, the WCG had moved from its original Arian origins and had come to assume the full divinity of Christ. The etiology of this was personally discussed with the late Dr. Herman Hoeh (2004), WCG doctrinal expert, before his death.

In the matter of the Trinity, what was the "new" knowledge that made belief in the Trinity possible? The simplest explanation appears to be that it was the removal of deficient knowledge – that is, the abandonment of the "you can be born into the God family" doctrine – and perhaps openness to the "personhood" of the Holy Spirit and an

elevation of the status of Christ. Thus, with these developments, nothing stood in the way of accepting the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, even though no logical arguments in favour of that acceptance appear to have been advanced prior to the change. All that remained was to try to understand an explanation of that doctrine, and some its logical characteristics, after the doctrine had been accepted (that is, *a fortiori*).

That brings us to Reich's remark that "motivation" is also needed, to supplement RCR competence. Using the theory of "cognitive dissonance" (Festinger, et. al., 1956), it would have become necessary now to find reasons for believing in the Trinity doctrine, especially in the case of the lower ministry ranks and the members since it had been imposed from above. It is also apparent that continued tenure in the ministry was contingent upon the doctrine being preached by them. Once the Trinity had become an acceptable doctrine, (positive) interest in it increased – that is, its "self-evidency" was now clear and more effort would have been exerted in "proving" the doctrine, even though this appears to have been done by re-viewing Biblical texts rather than considering the doctrine's logic. A further motivation for increased attachment to the doctrine was the satisfaction gained from a deeper appreciation of the central role of Christ (no longer "over shadowed" as number two in a "God hierarchy") and of the personal role of the Spirit. The Christ-centeredness and charismatic spirituality now manifest in the WCG experience attests to this change in attitude and motivation.

The task now is to identify, from what respondents have provided, some indication of their type of reasoning in respect of aspects of the Trinitarian question, in the expectation that those with a more comfortable grasp of the doctrine will reveal a higher level of RCR in respect of the Trinity and possibly other complex matters (such as the distinction between "law" and "grace," although that issue would require a protracted study; see Albert, 1997; Albrecht, 2004; Morrison, 2003). As the respondents have already been "persuaded" of the Trinity doctrine, a certain level of knowledge and motivation must be assumed. The hope is that some deeper reflection on the topic will be revealed. The extent to which the respondent moves from a polarized or static view of the doctrine should reveal that they are indeed thinking in a "complementarity" way and the sophistication evident in this should assist in the identification of appropriate RCR levels.

As the above model and scale are imprecise and subject to fallible interpretation, the task ahead must be performed in terms of hermeneutical principles. Reich's "checklists" are descriptive of "ideal types," and the identification of specific correspondences is left to the analyst. Reich's own efforts in this regard are admittedly subjective, although presented eventually with apparent precision. Confidence in Reich's procedure is not misplaced in this case study, despite the limitations of access to the respondents' full range of reasoning performance, in a variety of contexts. However, the attempt is justified in terms of the discussion in the preceding methodology discussion, as Reich's theory does not function as a universal template.

Initially, the intention was to have a number of follow-up interviews, with WCG leaders in California. The purpose of these interviews was to interrogate the respondents further, on a number of doctrinal issues, to probe into their thinking in terms of complementarity. An appropriate template for identifying and analysing such deeper responses was not forthcoming from Reich's work, in time for the completion of this thesis, and the interviews did not proceed, except for a lengthy telephone discussion with Dr. Hoeh. With hindsight, it is realized that extensive interviews with the WCG leaders may have strained relations with them on account of the considerable number of contentious issues inherent in written replies to the questionnaire. Instead, the published work of several of the WCG leaders (Tkach, 1997; Feazell, 2001; McKenna, 1997; Kroll, 2004) was examined to clarify RCR levels from their more extensive writings.

4.2.2 General Application

This research endeavour originated in the quest for understanding of the WCG's basis for transformation, within the realm of cognitive psychology, defined as dealing with cognitive frameworks (or reasoning patterns) that are used to interpret the world (*Weltanschauung*). Care must be taken with the extent of this view, as it involves several possibilities. Externally, it deals with the WCG's stance towards the other, thus also involving self-identification. Internally, and related to identity transformation, is the notion of an intra-WCG "change of heart" or new way of thinking. This is significant in terms of the WCG's phenomenal reality. The depth of this could be ascertained by gauging the extent to which Trinitarian thought has permeated the WCG's ideological and experiential *Sitz im Leben*.

Several thousand items (spanning seventy years) of WCG literature on doctrinal and other topics were surveyed, according to an index and reference to content (Buchner, 1983; Melton, 1978; Lea, 1972, 1973; and personal archives since those dates) for signs of reasoning patterns. This was done impressionistically, and in terms of dialogue with practitioners over almost four decades, from the standpoint of this present researcher's initial adherent status to later attempt at participant observation. The former insider status was moderated by extensive involvement in the past two decades with mainstream Christian theological education as well as dialogue with WCG schismatic groups and their leaders. In recent years, the *bona fides* of this research has been acknowledged by the current WCG leaders, during meetings with senior WCG officials in California and Australia. This has resulted in a reasonable balance between etic and emic (see Lindloff, 1995) dimensions of investigative judgment.

WCG materials included books, tracts and magazine articles (from the WCG's *Plain Truth*, *Good News*, *Tomorrow's World*, and *Worldwide News* publications), the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, and *Systematic Theology Project* (1978). Access was granted to restricted internal media such as *Pastor General's Report*, as well as to 14 lengthy video tapes used to reorientate WCG thinking. Hundreds of ex-WCG items were also consulted, to appraise their consistency with the older WCG theological positions (Buchner, 1983; and later archives). All these items were assimilated into this present researcher's capacity to identify and delineate the WCG's theological developments, as a facility for understanding the context and background considerations for the WCG transformation.

Chapter 5 is exploratory, wherein elements of RCR are taken to be present if a writer shows an awareness of multiple or paradoxical positions regarding the topic and appreciates their interdependence at a higher level. A clear hierarchy of such reasoning is extremely difficult to ascertain, in such a general review, and this attempt has followed an internalisation of Reich's heuristic in order to provide a relevant context for the identification of complex relations in the WCG's exposition and explanation of its new understanding. The unavoidable subjectivity of this effort is acknowledged, but the various sources will provide objective data upon which qualitative analysis can be legitimately based.

Exposure to a number of Australian WCG assemblies in recent times revealed that the dissemination (and assimilation) of new WCG teaching was uneven. The extensive “apostasy” arising from the WCG’s attempt to implement change was evidence enough of the “foreignness” of these new doctrines to the WCG’s established ethos. It also seemed apparent that many members continued their adherence to the new WCG despite the changes. Sampling of continuing members for evidence of their beliefs was deemed to be invasive and inappropriate, given the fragility of their membership and widespread reports of traumatization, and the defensiveness of ministers and members about being “investigated” in any way. From all accounts, the WCG’s transformation was initiated and imposed by a select few in the WCG’s hierarchy without any apparent mandate from the members at large. The extent to which a wider constituency was consulted or involved in the executive decisions has not been adequately disclosed. Therefore the WCG’s top leadership must be considered to constitute the architects of change. As far as the present thesis goes, it was only possible to engage these “gatekeepers” in the study for practical and diplomatic reasons. As such, the sampling process was straightforward, albeit restricted.

The chief executive officer and spiritual leader of the WCG, Joseph Tkach Junior, consented to this approach and those who could be identified as key contributors to the transformation were sent a questionnaire (**Appendix E**) seeking their candid accounts of the WCG’s change, specifically in terms of the role of Trinitarian thinking. The responses and their features of significance are dealt with in chapter 6 with a detailed use of Reich’s schema.

4.2.3 Specific Application

At this stage, there is no precise set of criteria for determining the presence or level of RCR in written materials. What follows has been guided by the scholarly writings of Reich, and his mentorship, and is by its nature exploratory and tentative. The inherent complementariness of Reich’s reasoning (in the exposition of his theory) compounds our difficulty. Reich (2003d, p.19) reminds us that, *generally*,

RCR is a distinct form of thought, categorically at the same level as Piagetian operations, cognitive complex thinking, dialectical thought, thinking in

analogies, etc., with which it shares certain operational components (such as isolating a given item among many others)

but, *specifically*,

RCR permits us to analyse the role and validity of explanations competing for the elucidation of a given explanandum ...

The expectation was that a consistent proto-methodology would emerge as the analysis of materials and statements proceeds. This provisional attempt is described in the next chapter.

To some extent this has been a negative exercise. That is, the materials considered in Chapter 5 and the survey responses analysed in the Chapter 6 were not *prima facie* candidates for the full application of Reich's schema. The reason for this is that most of the material consisted of statements of opinion or rhetorical flourishes, the use of quotations by other authors or Biblical "proof texts." The redactors of this material often had polemical objectives in mind, rather than sustained intellectual exposition. As such, the material was *prima facie* arrested in Reich's RCR Level 1, where either/or thinking is prevalent. A considerable amount of this material was scrutinized, but the result was uniform - the accumulation of dogmatic statements for or against the topic stood in the place of argument. Fallacious arguments were used - mostly *ad verecundiam*, appeal to authority; *ad litteram*, appeal to the literal meaning of words; and *ad nauseam*, attempt to prove by repetition rather than by reasoned proof (Fischer, 1970; Rybacki & Rybacki, 2004).

The above reveals that little of the materials perused had the capacity for analysis beyond RCR Level 1. To demonstrate this places the present researcher in an awkward position – either to select one page and show that it has a negative result, or to annex thousands of pages with the same absence of RCR characteristics. Obviously this will not do. A further complication, very much related to the WCG leaders' demonstration of a rise in RCR level, is that in the case of Dr. Tkach and Dr. Feazell (the principal change agents), there is an absence of contrasting statements on the relevant topic (The Trinity). As is shown in the following chapters, their responses to

questions on the Trinity furnished little opportunity to apply the RCR scale. Rather, a hermeneutical analysis was attempted to try to understand self-reports on change of perspective. Nevertheless, other respondents did show elevated reasoning processes but this was sometimes compromised by reliance on bases of authority for their conclusions. In the same way, the literature surveyed – even the most recent examples – showed a reliance on presenting “truth” as it is now understood, rather than critically engaging with alternative points of view.

Although this study is manifestly empirical, quantitative measures could not be applied due to the abstractness of the theoretical considerations in the literature, and limited number of responses from WCG leaders. As an empirically-based qualitative study, some content analysis could have been attempted but the relationship of this to the intricacies of RCR theory discouraged a conventional approach. Nevertheless, Ratcliff (2004) refers to standard rules for content analysis. These can be applied to the thesis by determining what “chunk” of data is suitable, then defining precisely what are the features to be identified in that chunk, in relation to the theory. Referring to Ratcliff (2004), “content analysis” might be pursued in this case by reviewing “chunks” of:

- (1) an old WCG anti-Trinity tract
- (2) a new WCG pro-Trinity tract
- (3) a survey respondent’s answer showing high RCR
- (4) a survey respondent’s answer showing low RCR

In the latter cases, such an attempt is made extensively in chapter 5, but not in a comparative way, as the responses were not entirely comparable. In the former cases, there is treatment of the Trinity literature in Chapters 1 to 3. Generally, the resources for analysis are approached “hermeneutically” in the absence of suitable quantification.

As outlined in the theory chapter, Reich’s methodology actually consists of three, tenuously related, approaches. First of all, there is his eight step heuristic, which outlines numerous considerations in dealing with complexity. A simple outcome of that approach would be to produce an encyclopaedic account of the topic, with some synthesis based on emergent affinities amongst the content, but this would be prone to excessive redundancy. The intervening approach is to take into account the five

components RCR (Piagetian operations, metalogical reasoning, cognitively complex thinking, analogical thinking, and dialectical thinking; see Reich, 1995b), but what would be refracted through such diverse theoretical complexities is unclear. However, the third of Reich's approaches – the identification of RCR functioning (according to levels) – would work best if the materials for analysis were specifically programmed to conform to expected outcomes. Such a procedure might be too contrived, yielding only expected results, as prompted by the researcher. The difficulties in implementing such a multi-faceted program will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

4.3 Methodological Procedures

4.3.1 Study 1 – Analysis of WCG and schismatic literature

(1) Aim

- (a) Content analysis to investigate change in the Trinity doctrine and reasons for the change.
- (b) Analysis of materials to discern precursors of RCR.
- (c) Analysis of specific materials to determine RCR levels.

(2) Materials

- (a) Old WCG magazines (The Plain Truth, Tomorrow's World, Good News, Worldwide News) as indexed by Lea (1972) and from personal archives;
- (b) Old WCG books and booklets on the topic, mostly listed in the Bibliography under Herbert W. or Garner Ted Armstrong;
- (c) Old WCG documents, including the (defunct) Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, and the Systematic Theology Project.
- (d) Old WCG ministerial bulletins, such as the Pastor-General's Report;
- (e) From the transitional period, 14 video cassettes of lectures (with restricted circulation notes) on the Trinity by Dr. Stavrinides.
- (f) From the recent period, video cassettes called "Called to be free" (Johnson & Kramer, 2004) and "Journey of change" (Tay, 2003).

- (f) From the recent period, published books by Tkach (1997), Feazell (2001), McKenna (1997); Albert (1997), Albrecht (2004), Lapacka (2001);
- (g) Numerous books and periodical articles published by external commentators on the WCG transformation;
- (h) Several booklets and tracts published by WCG schismatic groups.
- (i) Webs-sites maintained by WCG schismatic groups and various former adherents.

(3) Measures

The RCR heuristic (Appendix A) and RCR table of levels (Appendix B) were used.

(4) Procedure

The above materials were searched for passages that might be relevant to RCR, particularly in the context of Theology proper (including the Trinity.) Specimens exactly corresponding to the use of complementarity reasoning (or, more broadly, RCR) were difficult to locate but the relevant passages or statements in these sources were incorporated into the main discussion, and subjected to hermeneutical considerations in terms of RCR.

Following Reich's personal advice, an "internalization" of his RCR heuristic and levels was attempted, and applied intuitively. This meant that initially a broad assessment of materials was undertaken, given the various topics that were covered in the materials, culminating in a closer consideration of texts that manifestly dealt with explanations or discourse where the presence or otherwise of RCR could appropriately be located.

(5) Results are outlined in Chapter 5.

4.3.2 Study 2 – Survey of current WCG leaders

(1) Aim

The survey of WCG leaders was intended to identify the presence of RCR in their thinking processes, for the consideration of their cognitive approaches in their role as agents of change or of expositors of the new beliefs.

(2) Participants

Only long-term ministers of the Worldwide Church of God were selected from a personal knowledge of their identities and suggestions made by WCG headquarters. On account of the WCG's historical position on ministry, these were all males of European background. Although there are a few ministers of Afro-American and Asian descent, and women are now involved in leading worship, they were remote from the decisions being investigated. No discriminatory procedures were followed in the selection of the pool of participants.

(3) Measures

(a) The RCR heuristic (**Appendix A**) and RCR table of levels (**Appendix B**) were used both as a guide to developing the survey instrument and as a means of evaluating responses to it. The criterion for proper RCR was the presence of reasoning that went beyond basic either/or thinking, the highest level in any sentence being taken for the whole response.

(b) The survey instrument (**Appendix E**) was developed in conjunction with Reich's published work (notably Reich, 2002b) and was partially modelled on Reich's earlier, exploratory investigations. It consisted of two parts. Part A was a preliminary exercise intended to prompt the respondent's thinking on three statements that could be answered several ways. From the responses, an anticipatory set (regarding the respondent's predicted RCR level) was internalized. Part B consisted of 12 questions, most of which probed the topic of

the Trinity directly or indirectly, giving the respondent an opportunity to reflect on the topic in a number of ways or with perspectives of a dialectical character.

(4) Procedures

(a) Consent to proceed with this study was received from the WCG's president, following personal consultation with the WCG's Director of Missions in Pasadena, California, in September 1997. The University of Western Sydney human research ethics committee granted approval to administer the questionnaire, under the condition of sensitivity to the WCG's adherents, which received compliance.

(b) The WCG's doctrinal advisor, Dr McKenna, had earlier been nominated for a co-supervisory role. Communication with him was maintained throughout the critical stages of this study. The WCG also supplied research materials, such as the videotaped lectures by Dr. Stavriniudes.

(c) The Australian headquarters of the WCG was visited in September 2000 for consultation with the Director of Ministry (now the Australian Director), who gave a briefing on the WCG's developments.

(d) Attendance at several WCG religious services in several Australian locations was arranged. During these visits, informal listening and observation research procedures were adopted, although there was a need to more fully explain the goals of the research to concerned ministers.

(e) Three dozen WCG ministers in North America, Great Britain, and Australia were sent a questionnaire by email. Twelve responses were received from North America and one from Great Britain. All but one respondent consented to being identified in the thesis. Only two of the principal change agents, the president and vice-president, responded. Some busy executives sent their apologies.

(f) The planned personal interviews in California were abandoned due to the unavailability of a suitable interview template, and also the unavailability of funding for travel. However, one potential respondent telephoned in 2004 and an informal interview was conducted by telephone.

(g) The principal theoretician, Professor Reich, was several times consulted by email and over two days personally during his visit to Sydney, Australia, in August 2004. Prior to the publication of his main work by Cambridge University Press (Reich, 2002b) the manuscript was provided for critical review.

(h) Responses to the questionnaire were analysed for specific evidence of the presence of RCR. As with Study 1, specimens were difficult to locate but the relevant passages or statements in these sources were incorporated into the main discussion, and subjected to hermeneutical considerations in terms of RCR. Following Reich's personal advice, an "internalization" of his RCR heuristic and levels was attempted, and applied intuitively.

(5) Results of Study 2 are outlined in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

Results of Study 1:

A review of opposing interpretations of the Trinity as a cognitive construct, and transition from rejection to acceptance of the doctrine, in search of an explanation consistent with Relational and Contextual Reasoning

5.1 Introduction

The transformation of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) has been contextualized in relation to its adoption of the Trinity doctrine, to demonstrate the application of Relational and Contextual Reasoning (RCR). It may be possible to identify differences between the intellectual contexts of the Trinity doctrine's original formulation, its rejection by the early WCG under Herbert Armstrong, and its recent adoption by the WCG under Joseph Tkach. Factors in the WCG's adoption of the Trinity doctrine might explain difficulties the WCG has had in assimilating the doctrine.

Writers from the various offshoots of the WCG represented here evidently have a high view of their sacred texts and display piety. Biblical theology is a respectable approach to faith and reference to reliance on the Bible or church authority is normal in this environment. Evaluative comments have been made on the understanding that, for the purpose of the present thesis, the standard of orthodoxy is represented by mainstream, ecumenical Christianity. The purpose of the present thesis is to explore the cognitive performance of WCG and former WCG representatives in terms of Reich's predictions about thinking in a way that leads to understanding of the Trinity doctrine, and the implications for this in the WCG transformational journey.

In order to detect the presence of complementarity thinking, re-expressed as RCR, in the development of the WCG's understanding of the Trinity doctrine, it is necessary to review the WCG's traditional position, as a means of comparison (and to identify the presence or absence of such thinking prior to the WCG's transformation). A synthesis of this position will be attempted, followed by a search for the presence of

RCR in the WCG's emerging Trinitarian position and eventual adoption of a full Trinitarian position. Later in the chapter, the affirmations of the traditional WCG position by WCG dissidents (mostly in reaction to the WCG changes) will be considered. The indications are that the overall character of the traditional position is limited with respect to complementarity thinking, although there are hints of RCR in the new WCG position. That may be expressed in terms of the material considered, as well as the characteristic reasoning of its proponents.

As outlined in the Methodology chapter, general hermeneutical and abductive comments are made in each case, in relation to the possible presence of RCR tendencies. This material is included to deepen and "thicken" the analysis (Moser, 1999) of the specific responses examined in the following chapter. Reich's (2002b, p.125) dictum serves as our guide:

The main finding of both studies on the intelligibility of Christian doctrines is that RCR appears to be a necessary but insufficient condition for an intellectually acceptable understanding of the doctrines studied. Specific knowledge and interest (motivation) are needed in addition if the potential competence is to show up in the actual performance.

Material in this chapter is evaluated in respect of several nuances of RCR. In one view, material is said to represent RCR if it progresses beyond an either/or explanation. In such cases, no alternatives are offered – they are mono-perspectival. Yet Reich's theory allows those positions to be at RCR's base level 1, presumably because the statements might have potential for RCR development. This is akin to the relationship between special and general relativity, in this way: General relativity is an extension of special relativity to encompass non-inertial frames of reference. Hence, special relativity can be considered part of general relativity for special circumstances (Kaku, 2004). This present thesis accepts that a position expressed in opposition to all others implies at least the existence of those alternatives, even though rejecting them. Such a position can be RCR Level 1, according to Reich's description (Appendix B1), especially since it allows some of the alternatives to be kept in mind whilst a decision for the preferred option is being made.

5.2 The Traditional WCG Position

The WCG still sources its authority in the Bible and the assumed inspired thinking of its leaders who have sole and exclusive responsibility for the definition and promulgation of doctrine. Originally this was centred on Herbert W. Armstrong, but it appears that his successors have been able to operate under the same mandate. Currently, any minister not supporting the WCG's leadership (which includes teaching the Trinity doctrine) "may be terminated with or without cause or notice" (WCG, 2003). There has been no survey to ascertain what the ordinary WCG member actually thinks about the Trinity doctrine. From the responses analysed in the next chapter, it is evident that little thought is given to this doctrine by the general WCG membership and dissent probably only arose in the context of its imposition.

Armstrong's early teachings, with a few exceptions, were directly imported from the Church of God (Seventh Day) (see Mead, 1985). In the 1930s, Armstrong was associated with its Oregon Conference. Regarding its doctrine of God, it was in the Arian tradition, similar to the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Christadelphians (Alfs, 1984; Broughton & Southgate, 1995; Dugger & Dodd, 1972). This formed the basis for the early WCG doctrine, but it is not clear at which point the WCG moved to a more orthodox Christology. Much of its literature does not address Christological concerns in the language of academic theology, and it appears that the matter of Christ's divinity (in Binitarian terms, that is, both the Father and Son are fully God, although the Son is subordinate to the Father) came to be assumed by most members. Herbert Armstrong taught that Jesus was God (Armstrong, 1958) but it is not clear when he departed from classic Arianism (which teaches that Christ was a created being). His church definitely taught that Christ was both human and divine (Armstrong, G.T., 1957).

The few WCG members who referred to books critical of Armstrongism (such as Anderson, 1973; Benware, 1984; Campbell, 1974; Chambers, 1972; DeLoach, 1971; Hopkins, 1974; Martin, 1997; Sumner, 1974), whilst becoming unsettled by their accounts of WCG excesses, in most cases will already have become thoroughly indoctrinated by Armstrong's religious worldview. The influence of conspiracy theories was very strong (see Meredith, 1953, based on Hislop, 1948). Members were

systematically indoctrinated into Armstrong’s anthropomorphic view of God and against the Trinity – denounced as a Satanic deception! (WCG, 1966, 1981).

The anti-Trinity position was more fully expounded in *Is God a Trinity?* (Johnson, 1973). This booklet represented the standard WCG position prior to the changes. As do other WCG publications of that era, it seeks certainty of belief. That is, all religious concepts should be subject to the test of unambiguous Scriptural support. The uncertain formulations of the Trinity doctrine make it an easy target. Obscure Scriptures are dismissed, and there is little engagement with the New Testament as a whole to deal with the Trinitarian themes that may be present. Most of the “argument” centres on removing historical “props” for belief in the Trinity. We are reminded (p.20) that the Christological debates in the Fourth century were (arbitrarily) settled through political expediency rather than commitment to a theological consensus, but the subtle theological arguments of the time are ignored.

Is God a Trinity (Johnson, 1973) demonstrates its arguments by use of “proof texts” occasionally linked to quotes that are obliquely in support of the assertion, but is silent on alternative positions. The word “clearly” is often used to emphasise that the author’s point is self-evident from the Scriptures cited. Such exegesis culminates in the position of a duality, asserting that “One of the members of the Godhead became a man that we might have the opportunity to become God” (p.29). [Critics of Armstrongism, for example Martin (1997), have drawn attention to similarities in teaching about the God “family” between the WCG and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). For comments on the Mormon concept of God, see Beckwith (2004) or Walker (2004)]. The WCG position was that the Bible supports belief in a duality - Father and Son – but that there is no warrant or even need for a third person in the Godhead. Scholarship used to support this position is antiquated and unorthodox. Thus the author employs an either/or form of thought, at RCR level 1.

The relevance of a Trinity is swept aside – the Holy Spirit cannot become a person in the Godhead, since it is the means for others to become God (ironically, in terms of Lorenzen’s argument above, Johnson is close to early Eastern orthodoxy, at least, but unable to bridge the gap between his theological understanding and the implications of Trinitarianism). The Holy Spirit “begets” prospective members – to be

added to the Two already in existence. In this, the binitarian (actually “duality”) position is intricately connected to the old WCG’s limited understanding of the “God Family” doctrine. They stand or fall together, which is why the WCG’s move to Trinitarianism required abandonment of its literal version of the God Family idea. The real objection to the Trinity doctrine is that it “clouds the real purpose that God has in store for mankind” (Johnson, 1973, p.42). It is a deception – “Satan wants you to think that God is a limited Trinity – not a growing family or Kingdom into which we may, through the grace of God, enter” (p.44).

This booklet was supported by a set of reprint articles, *The God Family and the Holy Spirit* (WCG, c. late 1970s). It contains much of the material in the previous booklet, and uses the same kind of argumentation. A biological analogy is pressed, as follows. It would be fair to say that most WCG members took this literally.

And just as the seed of life or spermatozoon of a man engenders a child and makes that child his, so God uses His Spirit to engender us, upon baptism, into His family and make us His begotten children (p.10).

This is made further explicit:

The Holy Spirit impregnates us with the God nature. That spiritual begetting imbues us with the nature and mind of God. Throughout our Christian lives we continue to grow and develop in the understanding and mind of God until we are finally born into the God family and made immortal at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth ... We will then rule this earth as God’s sons* (p.12) [* Note – the word “daughters” was often used in the WCG to denote female members of the God family, thus introducing literal gender into the Godhead].

In Armstrong’s theology, nothing was more central than his belief that God would “elect” from humanity those who would qualify to become God, not replace the Father or Son, but become God in the same way that the Son is God, along the lines of reproductive analogies. Armstrong was also criticized for his universalistic application of the above process – those who were “elect” now were to support his end-time mission, then humans remaining after a future holocaust would have that opportunity,

until finally (post resurrection) all who had lived without knowing the Gospel would undergo the same process (Armstrong, 1978, 1981). In all this, a fairly low level of reasoning is evident – simply dogmatic assertions and forced analogies. Armstrong’s explicit books on sexual education (Armstrong, 1964, 1981) and human development (Armstrong, 1978) were a vehicle for the above theme.

5.3 Systematic Theology Project

During late 1970s, there was a short renaissance in WCG thinking. A number of WCG leaders, including Garner Ted Armstrong, believed they had a mandate from Armstrong Senior to present the WCG’s beliefs in a coherent and structured form. Until that time, the WCG’s teachings were scattered throughout its literature and produced a kind of “oral law.” The *Systematic Theology Project* (WCG, 1978) was produced under the editorship of Dr. Robert Kuhn, one of Armstrong’s highly educated assistants, but it fell victim to internal WCG politics and was labelled revisionist and liberal, and subsequently withdrawn from circulation. Around this time, several reformers – including Armstrong’s son – were excommunicated and replaced by traditionalists, not long before the WCG was subject to intervention by the State of California (Rader, 1980; Shepard, 1980).

The *Systematic Theology Project* (STP) might have led to some changes, as its scope was to take into account the “interrelationships and interdependencies among all the biblical teachings” (WCG, 1978, p.3). The STP prologue admits:

The structural associations and interactions among the numerous doctrines are not therefore limited to a simple two-dimensional linear progression This means that to explain fully almost any of the biblical doctrines, one would have to explain most of the others.

The WCG’s doctrinal edifice was interlinked in a way that doctrines supported one another. The entire “paradigm” probably was sustained in a somewhat circular fashion, like a “grand unity.” This is called “the “big picture” of God’s master plan” (p.5). The eventual collapse of that “master plan” probably accounts for the WCG’s doctrinal changes during the early transformation period under the Tkachs. Although

the STP endorsed the God Family concept as the “plan” God has for humanity, it actually ventures to state that “Jesus Christ is both the focal point and the ‘big picture’ of the entire Bible.” Thus “this systematic theology stresses Jesus Christ” (p.5). When visiting Pasadena at that time, it was possible to detect a definite mood of positive expectation that the WCG could now come of age as a Christian church. Some think that the centrality of Christ was the undoing of the STP – quite incorrectly, it was perceived as being “too Protestant.”

For the present thesis, the following STP (WCG, 1978) Doctrinal Statements are offered as examples of an attempt to re-express WCG doctrine at a more reasonable level, although the result is really a clearer statement of what eventually was rejected. The intelligence applied to this project nevertheless failed to realize the limitations of the kind of thinking used, thereby showing no real advancement in cognitive development.

- *Holy Spirit* (in Section I – Primary Doctrines)

“It is the power of God, the mind of God and the extended means by which God accomplishes His work throughout the universe. As such, the Holy Spirit is not a separate being; it has no independent existence as an individual entity or person within the Godhead Yet God the Father and Jesus Christ are separate beings: each maintains His own distinct identity and independent existence; and each, therefore, utilizes His own ‘Spirit,’ though both the Father’s Spirit and Christ’s Spirit are an integral part of the common Holy Spirit” (p.1).

- *Trinity* (in Section VII - Traditional Christian Doctrines)

“The concept of a closed or restricted Godhead composed of three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – is nonbiblical. The Godhead is a Family, presently revealed as composed of only the Father and the Son, which will eventually include all those who have been given salvation through Christ. The Holy Spirit is not a distinct person or individual entity but the power, mind and essence of God” (p.5).

In regard to the above statement on the Holy Spirit, even though there are signs of an attempt to overcome a problem in unity and diversity (between the Father and Son) by having an overarching Spirit, the persons are separate and their relationality is static. That places the statement at about RCR Level 1. The statement on the Trinity gives the Holy Spirit a functional, depersonalized quality, and sidesteps the internal dynamics of the Trinity. The alternative God Family position allows for diversity but the position remains at RCR Level 1.

These low scores result from the fact that, despite attempting to express WCG beliefs in a more cogent fashion, the statements are dogmatic and present really only one side of the question. There is no serious presentation of views alongside each other for consideration of their relative merits. That restricts any overlapping of ideas and implies intolerance of opposition. Alternatives remain incompatible and the arguments do not involve the juxtaposition of non-compatibles, as required for the effective consideration of RCR.

5.4 Armstrong's final position

Before his death, Armstrong's main teachings were compiled as *Mystery of the Ages* (Armstrong, 1985). Armstrong's thinking (and that of his book's editors) is revealed as concrete and literalist. For example – the image of God put forward is God is *anthropomorphic* – “Perhaps it will make God more real to you when you realize he is in the same form and shape as a human being” (p.44); God is *extensional* – “God can project his spirit to any place regardless of distance, but through his Spirit God is able to act on such objects or to change it as he wills” (p.45); God is *plural* – In Genesis 1, the “Hebrew word translated ‘God’ is *Elohim* – a noun or name, plural in form, but normally singular in grammatical usage. It is the same sort of word as *family, church, group ...*” (ibid:50). Nowhere in this book is there any “argumentation” based on logic that engages with the Trinity. Objections to the Trinity are based on the assertion that it is an error introduced first by Satan, then by Satan's church (“counterfeit Christianity”), to obscure the truth that God is reproducing Himself, and thus the Godhead is not closed (as would be the case with a Trinity). Satan's motive is said to be based on envy for being excluded from mankind's destiny to become God. From this position, there is no need to engage in any abstract reasoning about the Trinity. It is simply dismissed.

One of the WCG's current senior theologians (Fezell, 2003, p.1) has denounced Armstrong's opinions as "blustery, pseudo-authoritative" and misinformed. Fezell also states the orthodox Christian position, without going into the reasoning underpinning it and, in regard to confirming the Trinity doctrine, states that the WCG "does not attempt to explain how this is so, but only that it is so." His statements, however, do not engage with the reasons for Armstrong's position neither does he advance reasons for accepting the Trinity. Fezell (p.1) then says:

Herbert Armstrong's distinctive interpretations are rooted in his sense of a personal divine call to be God's sole authoritative, end-time representative on earth, and largely based on his study of disreputable sources, who possessed, like Armstrong, limited understanding of church history combined with limited skills of biblical interpretation.

This quote reveals some of the reasons why Armstrong's theological reasoning was limited. As pointed out by some WCG leaders (in the next chapter), they were strongly influenced by Armstrong's thinking and it was only after Armstrong died that they felt they could think for themselves. Therefore it is not surprising that their earlier writings (even the so-called "intellectual" efforts of the Systematic Theology Project) reflect the characteristics of Armstrong's style of reasoning.

5.5 The transition phase

At a time when the WCG was reviewing its doctrines, the WCG published an article called "Who was Jesus' Father?" (Stevens, 1990). The item refers to a "paternity problem" for Trinitarians, regularly presented in anti-Trinitarian tracts. If Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:25), then the Holy Spirit was Jesus' "father" rather than God the Father. Therefore the Holy Spirit cannot be a person, but is the power of God the Father. Furthermore, the doctrine of the Trinity "has been formulated by men under the influence of Satan" (p.1). After the article was withdrawn, Tkach Sr. (1991b, p.2) explained that its content represented the WCG's "traditional terminology, understanding and reasoning." Evidently, the WCG's apologetic for its traditional position seems to be at RCR Level 1, intolerant of ambiguity and complexity.

There are few authoritative sources documenting the transitional phase. At the start of 1991, the WCG did not accept the Trinity doctrine. The Pastor-General's son, Joseph Tkach Junior (then WCG Director of Ministry), admitted in a ministerial publication that "we do not accept the Trinity" (Tkach Jr., 1991). Tkach Jr. affirmed the non-personality of the Holy Spirit and commended Dr. Kyriacos Stavriniades, the WCG's Greek and theology expert, for his "sound and accurate" exposition of the WCG's position at that time. Stavriniades (1991), in a bulletin restricted to WCG ministers, gives an historical theology overview, commencing with the issue of whether the doctrine of relations in the Godhead should be based on an Augustinian monism (leading to difficulties with plurality) or the Cappadocian concept of "trihypostatic deity" (leading to difficulties with monism). The Western position, by allowing the "double procession" of the Holy Spirit, appeared to allow for diarchy – so the Father becomes another, and not the exclusive, Source. The diversity and unresolved nature of theological positions is pressed. Nevertheless, despite the WCG officially stating (to its members and to the public) that it was not Trinitarian, Stavriniades (p.10) states:

The Worldwide Church of God teaches the full divinity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – the biblical foundation for all Trinitarian discussions.

In July 1991, Tkach Senior wrote to the WCG ministers about change (Tkach, 1991a). Tkach elevated the value of growth in understanding of doctrine above the commitment to a traditional statement of that understanding. In his editorial, Tkach affirmed a better understanding of the dual nature of Christ (implicitly endorsing the Chalcedonian Definition). Tkach now believed that the WCG's old positions were flawed due to semantic deficiencies, thus causing misunderstanding. He stated "it was a matter of knowing what we meant, but not realizing what we appeared to be saying" (p.2), implying that the WCG meant to communicate an acceptable truth but was hindered by inappropriate language. Under Armstrong, the WCG used to teach that "we are to become God as God is God." Tkach now claimed that WCG members always knew that this did not mean a status that orthodox Christians find objectionable.

This assertion would have surprised many WCG members, who for decades knew very well what Armstrong did mean by his statements, and their forceful

reiteration by senior WCG evangelists. In his exposition of what he claims the old WCG taught, Tkach presents it in such a way that makes it appear to be entirely orthodox, even though Armstrong presented it in such a way that exposed it to charges of heresy, according the accepted teachings of mainstream Christianity. It is this kind of revisionism that upset many of those who eventually left the WCG.

Tkach (p.4) goes on:

Without our realizing it, some of our explanations gave the impression that we believed the immortal saints would be absolutely identical with God
Shortly before his death, Mr. Armstrong talked to me about many things ... One thing that he told me that he was concerned that we had inadvertently created just such an impression, an impression he never intended to create.

Armstrong's secret death-bed retreat from his most ardently held theology cannot be verified, and the above account has been met with great scepticism (Armstrong's views on humans becoming God are dogmatically and unambiguously stated in most of his writing, for example Armstrong 1978, 1981, 1985). Nevertheless, at that time, still affirming the principle of using the Bible alone as a foundation for WCG doctrines, Tkach (1991a) also stated: "We do not believe the doctrine of the Trinity. We do not believe the Holy Spirit is a third person in the Godhead" (p.6). However, it was now open to the WCG to reconsider that position, since it could no longer hold to the earlier objection that the Trinity closed the door to membership of the God Family.

In December 1991, Tkach Sr. announced the first edition of the WCG's *Statement of Beliefs*. This would be the first attempt to revive something like the discredited Systematic Theology Project. Tkach (1991b, p.1) wrote:

In the statement about God, you will notice that the final sentence reads: "The Church affirms the oneness of God and the full divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Someone may ask, "Does this mean we now accept the doctrine of the Trinity?" No, it does not. The doctrine of the Trinity in the Western Church attests the union of three Persons in one Godhead, so that the three are one God as to substance, but three Persons as to individualities. We do

not accept that teaching; we believe that the word *Person* is inaccurate when referring to the Holy Spirit.

Tkach (1991b, p.2) then admits the WCG's error in Stevens (1990) above, writing "we did not understand the doctrine we were attempting to refute. The Trinitarian concept of God does *not* teach that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *separate* beings." Now, *despite not accepting the Trinity doctrine, the WCG still gave a satisfactory account of it* as follows:

To a trinitarian, the natural way God works is through the Holy Spirit. In other words, the trinitarian would not see the Holy Spirit as a separate entity from God the Father, as our argument assumed. Our argument would be valid only if the Trinity teaches three Gods, which it does not.

The WCG's old arguments imperfectly drew on analogies and metaphors but, at this point, Tkach (1991b, p.2) states "It is the teaching of the Church, based on the Holy Scriptures, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God in two divine Persons, and that the Holy Spirit is not a person ..." and also (p.2):

The Father and the Son are not two Gods. They are *one* God. Likewise, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three Gods. They are one. But neither do we believe it is correct to say they are three Persons in one God.

What this reveals is that the WCG, prior to its adoption of the orthodox Trinity, came to have a form of reasoning that was quite consistent with a Trinitarian formula – having already accepted a Chalcedonian position on the two natures of Christ – even though the Personality of the Holy Spirit was not admitted, ostensibly on the basis of Scripture. By that the WCG simply confirmed its classic binitarian position, perhaps in a more conciliatory way. That opens up the possibility that there was no need for a radical change in reasoning – only an advance in Scriptural exegesis – for the Trinity to be adopted and raises the possible distinction between a *form* of reasoning and simply changing the *content* of premises while continuing to reason as before. That there was some change in the senior Tkach's thinking is clear as, now, he was cognizant of the grounds for recognizing alternatives (binitarian and Trinitarian) although he continued

to prefer the binitarian position. However, this development was more within a high RCR Level 1 than a proper Level 2, as Tkach was not yet ready to accept both positions as acceptable alternatives.

The above process had commenced by August 1992, when the WCG published a new booklet (“*God is...*”) on the topic even though Tkach Sr. (1992a, p.1) still maintained that “we do not teach the doctrine of the Trinity.” The significant change by that time was the withdrawal of uninformed opposition to the doctrine. Later that year, the WCG endeavoured to explain to its ministers the distinction between its position and the orthodox Trinity. Instead of being a Person, “the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Father and the Son in us ... The Holy Spirit is God” (Tkach 1992b, p.3). Again, the non-Person status of the Holy Spirit is said to be based on Scripture. Yet the reasoning involved was broadening, or more open-minded. It was realized that the “God is a Family” concept was too narrow a defining characteristic, and “The family analogy, like all analogies, breaks down when taken too literally” (p.3). Tkach Sr. (p.4) states further that:

We used to feel that we disproved the Trinity by saying God has an ever-expanding family. This idea was predicated upon human beings becoming “God as God is God”. Thus, we felt the Trinity was erroneous and deceptive because we thought it limited participation in the family of God.

In July 1993, following high level WCG conferences on the God question, the God Family idea was abandoned. The reason given was that the old doctrine appeared to stray from true monotheism. “The idea of more than one being in a family or hierarchy of gods is condemned throughout the Scriptures” (Tkach 1993a, p. 2), yet the same Scriptures were once appealed to by the WCG to support the idea. Why the change? The word “beings” still features here, revealing an undercurrent of former thinking – “The Bible does not allow for the existence of two God Beings” (p.2). The question of Jesus’ dual nature needed to be resolved, and Tkach Sr.’s reasoning was as follows:

So now we begin to see that the Bible gives us two facts that are apparently contradictory. But I say *apparently*, because they only *appear* to be contradictory because our minds are finite ... (Tkach 1993a, p.3).

This statement reveals a shift in thinking from being fixated on incompatibility to allowing the possibility of the co-existence of non-compatibles, thus opening the argument to consideration in terms of RCR.

Tkach Sr. (1993a, pp.3-4) then gives this account of the beginnings of change in the WCG's understanding of the Trinity (also see Pack, 2003, p.68). It is presented, with minimal abbreviation, to show the key basis for the beginning of Tkach's changes:

Mr. Armstrong was never formally challenged on this point, and he never had to defend his teaching in the same way that I have been forced to do. I firmly believe that if the same facts had been brought to Mr. Armstrong's attention that we have had to face over the past few years, he too would have made the changes we have made. Mr. Armstrong's integrity in putting the Bible and truth ahead of his own teachings, when he was convinced of the facts, is a matter of record. Likewise, when the Church today is challenged on a point of doctrine, we have to be able to defend our doctrine from the Bible. Now we can I was first challenged on this point when I put a "Personal" in *The Plain Truth*, in which I set forth the traditional arguments against the Trinity. In response, I received a letter from a priest, who said he had respected *The Plain Truth*, but now realized we had no idea of what we were talking about I put several men to work on it, and what we began to find, after a short time, was that most of what we had written on the development and history of the Trinity doctrine was at best superficial and based on misunderstanding, and at worst, just plain false Our old literature taught that there are two God Beings in one God Family, each composed of Holy Spirit. That teaching, which *implied* that there are two Gods, is not biblical Despite our former explanation ... we always *experienced* God in the biblical way! we have always known that in some way, God is one; but we simply didn't analyse our *way of explaining* that biblical fact to see where it might lead.

At this point it appears that the change has been the result of a *different* view (not to be confused with a better understanding, although such coincidence is possible) of the Biblical evidence, which the WCG claims as its primary source of authority, rather than any new interpretive scheme or form of reasoning. It still seems to be a dogmatic statement, with no evidence of RCR above Level 2. Even a statement at Level 2 may be prone to dogmatism, since the criteria allow for statements in support of one or several positions, with relative weighting. The outcome, consistent with the above reasoning, may be that alternatives could be held for reasons other than an analysis of their inter-relationships. Even though placed in a somewhat anomalous position, the apparent continuity of new with old rescued the WCG from a complete *volte face*.

Evidently drawing heavily from Stavrinides, Tkach Sr (1993b) in August 1993 expounded on the Holy Spirit, to clear up any misconception that the Holy Spirit is either a separate “Being” in the Godhead or is an impersonal force. The WCG traditionally rejected the first position, initially on Biblical grounds but also because of the reasoning it used in connection with that source. Tkach (1993b, p.2) says that “a purely logical standpoint” needs to be supported by Biblical revelation. It is evident that the WCG needed to adopt a fresh approach to the Biblical evidence, to begin to accept the notion of the Trinity, but was this accompanied by (or followed by) a new kind of reasoning? To be sure, the “new” doctrine is explained with a clearer appreciation of Scriptures that was available before, and the explanation is reasoned from these sources, but not really differently to the way of thinking used to reject these interpretations during the former doctrines. The following statement (Tkach 1993b, p.4) (reiterated in Tkach 1993c, p.2) is instructive:

Again, I want to emphasize that we have always experienced and understood God *as he is revealed in the Bible*.....In our practice and experience, nothing changes.....But our explanation of how the Bible teaches that God is one has changed What we didn't previously understand was how to put our belief down on paper in such a way that it didn't lead to biblical and theological problems.

The booklet “*God is ...*” (WCG, 1993) was re-issued some time later in 1993 to incorporate these new understandings. That edition is still distributed by the WCG. In a chapter called “One in three and three in one,” the booklet (p.35) admits that the statement “appears illogical to human reason.” It goes on to claim that there are many truths (for example, that God has no beginning) that are impossible to explain, but can be accepted “because the Bible reveals it.” This is an important aspect of the WCG transformation: its claims are based on the authority of the Bible, and the authority of those who claim to be ministers of God. The booklet appears to be acceptable to mainstream Christianity. In regard to the Trinity, it says “It is not a matter of two or three separate God Beings *deciding* to be in perfect agreement with each other. It is a matter of one God, one will” (p.37). It goes on to say:

To worship God is to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one and only one God. That does not mean we are to single out the Holy Spirit and worship the Holy Spirit as though the Holy Spirit is a separate Being.

In the June 21, 1994 issue of *Pastor General's Report*, Tkach Sr (1994, p.1) – in the face of widespread opposition within the WCG - reminds readers that he already had “pointed out that ministers cannot simply be silent about the Church’s new doctrine on the nature of God” and that “lack of support creates division, uncertainty and confusion among the members.” Furthermore, support should be shown “even though you may not yet fully understand or agree with the new doctrine.” Likewise, ministers are to “have confidence in Christ’s ability to lead those he has chosen.” Ministers already were aware of the paradox of a “plurality within a unity” in the doctrine of God, and Herbert Armstrong is credited with trying to “explain this paradox in terms of plural members of one *family*” (p.2). Although Armstrong claimed to be directly inspired by God, but was incorrect, Tkach Senior ventures to say “God led me to make this change” and he warns the ministers that “to remain silent is, in reality, to trumpet your disagreement and consequently to foster division” (p.3). The change of doctrine was indeed the occasion for a great schism in the WCG, and some dissidents have attributed this to the elder Tkach’s administrative style (Stuhlman, n.d.).

To strengthen the basis for WCG doctrinal changes, ministers were provided with extracts from outside theological writers (Haight, 1994; McGrath, 1994). An

insider, John Kossey (1994, p.7), alludes to the WCG's previous either/or thinking as leading to a bitheistic understanding of God. He suggests that dichotomous thinking led to wrong conclusions and now sees "the necessity of both/and thinking." His paper on "The God of the Old Testament" provides a more subtle account of the interrelationship of the Father and Son, and on biblical grounds dismisses the old WCG view that Jesus was the Yahweh of the Old Testament (but note Kärkkäinen, 2004, p.146). The explanation offered by Kossey (1994, p.31) is that the WCG's earlier view (the Jesus is the God of the Old Testament) resulted from Herbert Armstrong's response to liberal theologies that portrayed the Old Testament God as "stern and vindictive." According to Kossey, Armstrong wanted to show the continuity of the Son's actions and role in salvation history but, in the absence of trinitarian belief, inadvertently fostered the idea that the Son acted on behalf of the Father from Creation. Nevertheless, perfection in theological thinking has always been elusive and it is worth noting that "It is not surprising that the Gospels contain syntheses of Christological concepts originally independent or even contradictory" (Grant, 1990, p.22).

The WCG's 1995 *Statement of Beliefs* is evidently Trinitarian although there are some interesting although subtle omissions. Jesus Christ is described as "fully God and fully human" but not as "God". Under "The Holy Spirit," the text refers neither to "he" nor "it." The Holy Spirit is "the third Person of the Godhead, ...the Comforter sent from God to the Church." But the text does not say that the Holy Spirit is God. In this might be discerned lingering reservations about the "personality" of the Holy Spirit, and a trace of the "agency" understanding. Furthermore, in Tkach Jr. (1993, p.22) reference is made to Christ in these terms: "Now that he has been glorified, the human nature has been removed." McKenna (personal correspondence, 2004) wrote that he was "shocked to read it," but the quote highlights the theological understanding of WCG leaders at that time.

5.6 Advances in J.W. Tkach 's understanding of the Trinity

Examples of the late Tkach Senior's passages on the Trinity, for and against, have been placed in **Appendix D**. The only evidence for the sequential development available for study is letters to WCG ministers written by Armstrong's immediate

successor (Tkach, 1991b, 1992a, 1993b, 1994). These items show that there were significant changes in the doctrine between 1991 and 1994.

How do we proceed with the application of RCR scales to these exhibits? It is uncertain that Tkach Sr. actually wrote the words, therefore this short review is not an assessment of the late Tkach's reasoning capacities; rather it simply looks at what is written. A line by line search for "logic" or logical arguments is a grammatical exercise beyond our concerns. There must also be respect for the context, which may be text-related (that is, how a quote is properly related to the message being presented) or audience-related (that is, members of a faith community being assisted through periods of difficult change). After closely reading the material, with Reich's heuristics and levels (Appendices A, B and C) in mind, here is what can be said. The quotes regarding the Trinity are stated, followed by comments at the end.

(1) Tkach 1991b (17 December 1991) – Quotes:

The Bible does not fully explain how this can be so, but Scripture does call on us to believe itThere are things that are simply beyond our limited, finite, human ability to grasp (p.2).

When we are granted immortality we will no doubt understand these spiritual complexities. Until then, we must simply take on faith what the Bible tells us to be true (p.3).

(2) Tkach 1992a (18 August 1992) – Quotes:

There are specific, biblical reasons that we hold the nontraditional position that we do It is not necessary, nor is it right, to simply brand something with wicked-sounding names just because we do not agree with it (p.1).

(3) Tkach 1993b (10 August 1993) – Quotes:

If any human being set out to explain God from a purely logical standpoint, without the Bible, he would never come to the conclusion that the one God is, in

some very real sense, also “three”. The Bible leads us, by revelation, to a conclusion that we would never be able to reach on our own I want to emphasize that we have always experienced and understood God *as he is revealed in the Bible* But our explanation of how the Bible teaches that God is one has changed (p.2).

(4) Tkach 1994 (21 June 1994) – Quotes:

we can all see that the Bible presents us with a plurality within a unity and the Bible does not solve that paradox for us in any particular passageFather, Son, and Holy Spirit are three ways or modes of being the one God. This is a position required by Scripture. I think every minister would agree that Scripture doesn't really explain *how* this is so – it simply presents God in this way (p.2).

You should point members to headquarters and to the human leadership Christ has chosen to administer his Church Our doctrine is thoroughly biblical, as most of our ministers understand (p.3).

The above quotes were selected as indicative of the *grounds* for accepting any argument in these letters, rather than being arguments in themselves. The remainder of the text in all instances consists of declarative sentences, pertaining to the “truth” now taught or statements about previous or other beliefs. There is no real argumentation between the positions, neither is there an attempt to enter into the new position to explain it. Rather, there is an appeal to authority - the Bible, God and church leadership - as the warrant for accepting the new beliefs. Although stated relatively mildly in these letters, testimony from respondents (Chapter 6) shows that the attempt to persuade the WCG of these changes was fraught with difficulty. The letters progress from a denial of the Trinity, to its acceptance, but it seems that the form (and even content) of the reasoning remained constant. As indicated in later chapters, this indicates that the level of reasoning (in RCR terms) did not much correspond with the nature of the logic in the topic (The Trinity) and that the doctrine was not introduced with the full benefit of this higher level reasoning, although later attempts to explain it did show an advance in reasoning in some instances.

5.7 Dr. Kyriacos Stavrinides

Support for the new Trinitarian position was provided by the WCG's Greek expert, Stavrinides. In August 1993, 14 video tapes and printed notes of Stavrinides' lengthy lectures on the topic were distributed throughout the WCG (and these resources were later provided for the present thesis by Tkach Jr.). These were in the form of a biblical exposition and historical overview, intended to equip the ministers in their duty to explain the Trinity to their congregations, whether they agreed with it or not.

They were also exercises in methodology, and presented a form of reasoning that would assist the hearers to make the transition from the old to the new teachings. The approach that appears to have been adopted was to identify a logical consequence of an argument, then that consequence was critiqued as a means of refuting the original thesis (Stavrinides, 1993a, p.14). This procedure was followed numerous times, but Handout #12 deals explicitly with the Trinity. The argument was premised on a strict Old Testament monotheism. Aspects of the argument cascade and were delineated, explained or refuted by Stavrinides based on his assumed expertise in theology and the Biblical languages. The argumentation seemed to be reductive, rather than rational. Stavrinides set up objections to his argument and then proceeded to refute them. Not all "consequences" of the original point seemed to be "logically" connected, thus giving rise to possible confusion and mental fatigue in the audience. He was also thought to be "abrupt and rude" to those who could not follow his reasoning (Lapacka, 2001, p.251).

The modern Trinitarian problem was discussed in a lengthy paper (Stavrinides, 1993b), restricted to those who had viewed the tapes. The paper claims to be grounded in the Biblical evidence, but allows for implicit findings. In style, it is a type of logical exposition. It assumes that the early New Testament church based its beliefs exclusively on the Old Testament. However, in contrast to this assumption, the New Testament reveals St. Paul's familiarity with non-Jewish thought forms and ideas (Barnett, 1999; Barclay, 1958; Bruce, 1977; Ziesler, 1983) and Marshall (1976, p.36), relying on Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism* (1974), asserts that "The whole of Judaism at this time ... must be characterized as *Hellenistic* Judaism" (italics in original). Stavrinides' paper mounts a strong defence of monotheism in the Old Testament, and takes pains to eliminate any kind of duality in the Hebrew word, *elohim*, which was central to

Armstrong's thesis that God is a uniplural entity, although the term could refer to a "plural of majesty" (Erickson, 2000, p.31). Stavrinides (1993a, p.7) refers to Armstrong's claims as "erroneous," preferring the word "God" when *elohim* is used in the singular, and "divine powers" when in the plural. Against this, one needs to refer to the arguments put by the Church of God, The Eternal (below). In that and other neo-Armstrong sources, the presence of a pluralistic view of God is evident from the same biblical texts. This does not matter as both sides are appealing to an authoritative basis for their beliefs, and argue from that base accordingly.

Stavrinides (1993b, p.11n), in relation to the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19), states that:

A triadic statement makes reference to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A Trinitarian statement requires the additional thought that these three constitute one God. No such thought is explicitly stated in the New Testament.

Thus the WCG was Triadic in its belief, rather than orthodox Trinitarian, at least during the transition phase. Whatever the theological issues involved, perhaps there is here an argument of succession: from binitarian, to triadic, to Trinitarian. Is it possible to find in the triadic phase a stepping stone to a higher RCR level? Stavrinides (p.11) goes on:

The advocate of divine dualism has the formidable task of explaining how the Father and the Son are one and the same being, in a way that would satisfy the demands of the Old Testament, and why, in that case, the Holy Spirit is not divine, yet is revealed with the Father and the Son in the theophanies of the New Testament.

Obviously the WCG had gone beyond "divine dualism," but how could it demonstrate, via logic, that there is a "divine threesome"? Initially, the task was accomplished by using Scriptural verses that identified common properties. The reasonableness of each citation was given as proof. Stavrinides (1993b, p.14) acknowledged this dependence on Biblical evidence for stating that "The concept of duality in the Godhead can now be dismissed as untrue," and that "God, *in some sense*, is a Trinity ..." (italics in original).

Also acknowledged was the insufficiency of quoting scriptural evidence for the explanation of how the Trinity can be understood.

How the case for the Trinity can be argued is deemed to be philosophical (Stavriniades 1993b, p.14), but this is not attempted in Stavriniades' paper. Rather, arguments of a theological kind are advanced and it is in these that evidence for RCR needs to be located. This formidable task commences with the choice of nouns to complement two adjectives, stated as: "three --?- in one --?--". Stavriniades (p.15) rejects the use of the same term for the gaps, as being "logically impossible." Therefore, he argues, the Trinity does not involve three gods, or three separate beings or entities. The "God family" concept is dismissed as a mere analogy. Stavriniades (pp.16-17) appears to explain the Nicene formulation as follows: However characterized, God is always the same substance and each expression of God consists of that identical substance (*homoousios*). But the image (*charakter*) of one reflects the image of the other. This reflection is a *hypostasis* – which is represented several ways, albeit three ways in the Trinity. But the ways are not interchangeable; they are reflective. That is, God the Father is always the Father; the Son is always the Son; the Holy Spirit is always the Holy Spirit. But each is always God, inseparable from the other because they subsist in one. They have a common ground of being or essential nature (original meaning of "substance") but not "material" – as God is spirit. Nevertheless, one of these hypostases (the Son) materialized as Jesus the Christ.

The use of the word "person" in respect of *hypostases* is explained as being philosophical, rather than psychological or linguistic. Although God may be understood as a "self," the context for this is God's relationship to another, that is, a human being. In absolute terms, God cannot be a self that requires another, therefore God cannot be a "person" as usually understood. But can God be expressed as "persons" (that is, as three persons)? Only if God is not thought of as one person with three masks (modalism). Now in regard to God's "personality," is God "someone"? Protestant theologians seem to have used "the expedience of everyday speech" (Stavriniades 1993b, p.20) to portray the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in personal ways. But the argument is that having personal characteristics does not make one a person. When the terms are used incorrectly, as is the case when "person" is understood as the only conclusion to having personal characteristics, the attempt to construct a Trinity becomes unreasonable and a

mystery. It cannot be “logical” if the terms are misunderstood. Stavrinides (p.21) shows that the false argument that God’s three *hypostases* are three persons, derived from one God, leads to the existence of *four* personalities: each of the “Trinity” plus the God from whom they are derived.

The drift of Stavrinides’ argument (see previous paragraph re gaps) is that there must be a distinction between “being x” and “being an x”. God is not “three x’s in one x”. That is, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each x, not *an* x” (Stavrinides, 1993b, p.22). This brings us to the position where although God is not a person (what God is), nevertheless God is personal (what God does), but God is not simply a force. Given the above reasoning, it would not be difficult to revisit the concept of Holy Spirit as “person” to “complete” the Trinity. If “person” is not understood in the same way as a human person, then there should be no obstacle to accepting a third *hypostasis* in the Godhead. The previous doctrine confused this “person” with “being,” almost an “interloper” in the place resurrected Christians were to occupy. Stavrinides (p.24) also removes the obstacle that made apparent gender (in fact, grammatical gender) of the Holy Spirit fortify the notion that the Holy Spirit was a person in “his” own right. By removing this obstacle, and explaining the notion of hypostatic union, there could be little objection to admitting the Holy Spirit to the Trinity. Stavrinides (p.25) sums it up: “God has revealed himself in three ways of *being* (not in three beings.)” On p.26, he presents scriptures that would result in any Christian implicitly accepting God as Trinity and he suggests that to deny this would be because of “misguided emotions, perhaps prejudice, or misunderstanding.” He states that “Many people are confused by emotions, by unwarranted assumptions, or by missing the purpose of analogical language, anthropomorphic pictures, and spatio-temporal relations.” All this is a great departure from the earlier literalist interpretations of the WCG – and the numerous splinter sects that carry on its tradition.

Stavrinides (1993b, p.38) refers to the inconsistencies resulting from literal interpretations of part of a text and figurative interpretations of another, in regard to Genesis 1:26-27 where it is written that God said “Let Us make man” (the word “Us” being a plural pronoun), followed by the statement that God made man “in His own image” (the “His” being singular). Stavrinides suggests that both statements should be endorsed, and then refers to “uncomplimentary” {sic} approaches. The context makes it

clear that the argument revolves around what can be accepted as being “complementary,” in this case both statements. This is evidence that Stavrinides, in his exposition, is aware of and applies something akin to complementarity. This is done with respect to the contexts of the various passages, which are understood in terms of their literary tropes. Stavrinides (p.39) dismisses the application of the word “Us” to the internal relations of the Trinity (as has been traditionally ascribed) and applies it to “God and the host of heaven.” We are also cautioned about building a doctrinal edifice on the inadequate (often anthropomorphic) Hebrew conceptions of God.

Finally, Stavrinides (p.31) claims that his paper has identified “the common ground between the biblical teaching about the nature of God and the traditional statements regarding the Trinity.” This statement is representative of Stavrinides’ efforts to explain the Trinity, in a way that takes into account the claims of various positions, and demonstrates that he can operate at RCR Level 4 at least. In Reich’s terms (Appendix B1), Stavrinides evidently connects a number of possibilities and “evokes” their relationship to each other and to the common theme and context. This shows that he is not limited to the restrictions placed on thinking, characteristic of lower RCR levels, and he is able reconstruct the terms of relationship between various elements or positions towards a multi-perspective viewpoint. For those who understood Stavrinides’ reasoning, the possibility of a Trinitarian position would have become more apparent.

5.8 The revised Worldwide Church of God position

5.8.1 Dr. Joseph Tkach, President

Tkach became the WCG’s organizational and spiritual leader upon the death of his father. He had earlier left active ministry in the WCG, remarried and returned – quickly to become Director of Ministers when his father assumed the leadership after Armstrong’s death. Tkach Junior’s rapid rise to the presidency bitterly disappointed others who had long-standing aspirations to succeed Armstrong.

Tkach’s response to the questionnaire is found in Chapter 6. Preliminary background material is provided here, primarily from his book, *Transformed by Truth* (1997), which introduced the public to an official version of the WCG changes. For a

positive review of Tkach's book, see Askin (1998). For an even-handed review, see Tabladillo (1998). Highly critical reviews will be found in Stuhlman (n.d.), Marshall & Williams (2004), and Williams (n.d.). At this point, only those aspects related to the Trinity (or changes in thinking) will be noted.

Tkach (1997, p.180) places the WCG's acceptance of the truth of Trinity doctrine in July 1993. Prior to this, a number of WCG beliefs were abandoned, leaving a "void" (p.133), which was to be filled with the topic of Christ. Tkach (p.38) reveals that "We never developed a consistent doctrine of Christ, a biblically based Christology." In 1991, the "God family" teaching was abandoned (p.144). That removed one of the central doctrines of the old Armstrongism, and the WCG was free to pursue new biblical understanding, that led to more orthodox positions. Up to that time, Tkach admits that:

We vigorously denied the Trinity, claiming that it was a pagan doctrine. Although we upheld the deity of Christ, we understood him to be a *separate* God from the Father; while we said He had always existed with God Almighty, we also taught He did not become the Son of God until He was born into the world through the virgin Mary (p.92).

In 1993, the WCG accepted Christ has having eternally existed "as God's Son." Then, writes Tkach, "following logically on the heels of that doctrinal change, we also started to teach the Trinity" (p.146). These changes are attributed to Bible study but no account is given of why the study was instigated or what theological issues were involved. The level of reasoning in the book is illustrated by:

The Bible insists there is but one God but makes it equally clear that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. That means the Trinity must be true (p.147).

Tkach's respect for the Bible as the authoritative source of doctrine and the foundation for his reasoning appears to elevate faith (conceived as unquestioning belief) above logical argumentation. The result is that the Bible's teaching is endowed with a logic of plausibility, which needs to be accepted rather than argued with.

Then “In 1993, following logically on the heels of that doctrinal change [re Christ], we also started to teach the Trinity” (Tkach Jr., 1997, p.146). The reason given for this is that “The more we studied the Scriptures, the more we saw that we had misunderstood” (p.148). That is, the change seems to be attributed to exegesis – the truth was more “plain” than before. It is claimed that the path towards reform commenced when biblical content became clearer with more careful study, with the result that conclusions were drawn that were in accord with those held by mainstream Christianity. Further reasoning took place on this basis. That is, the WCG did not reason itself into the new beliefs, it sought to understand them once they became apparent, and any reasoning that followed was an attempt to explain or justify them.

What were the reasoning processes, and in what way did they differ from previous reasoning? Tkach Jr. (p.149) reveals that “cognitive dissonance” plagued the WCG leadership for years. They were required to teach various ideas that were “radically conflicting.” A major area related to God (pp.151-154). “God” was worshiped, but they “denied the full deity of Jesus.” Jesus was not worshiped in His own right, but the WCG members expected to be worshiped when they became spirit beings. But this cognitive dissonance was not apparent for many. Tkach (p.152) writes “for more than twenty-five years the contradiction never dented my consciousness.” Regarding doctrinal inconsistencies, Tkach (p.153) says “It’s not that we saw the contradiction and tried to defend it; we simply didn’t see the problem.” This suggests an under-current of sensing contradiction (resulting in the experience of the affective consequences of cognitive dissonance) without the actual contradictions being dealt with at a manifest cognitive level, either because the paradoxical nature of those positions was not perceived or it was steadfastly dismissed.

By early 1994, Joseph Tkach Jr (1994a, p.5) was able to write “Self-deception can arise from habitually viewing all things in purely black-and-white terms, as we might have done when we were first baptized as “infants in Christ (1Corinthians 3:1).” The WCG by that time had become more open to complex thinking, and this was now applied to the Trinity. Tkach (p.6) wrote that “At the time of baptism, everyone in God’s church was an infant *in Christ*.” He admits that “Studying trinitarian theology might upset years of thinking differently about God.” In this paper, Tkach does not reveal how the leadership developed to a higher level of understanding.

In his book, Tkach Jr, (1997, p.83) describes his father as a practical man but not a theologian. “It was my dad’s style to publish an article announcing a change and then delegate to others the teaching of it.” Any hidden agenda is denied – “Frankly, neither he nor I were smart enough to create such an agenda (p.84). This puts the Tkach (father and son) contributions to the genesis of the WCG’s study of the Trinity doctrine in an interesting light, but it does not reveal the motivations behind their push for change.

5.8.2 Dr. J. Michael Feazell, Vice-President

As special assistant to the Pastor-General, and Director of Denominational Publications, Feazell is in a central position to comment on the WCG’s transformation process, and he responded to the questionnaire analysed in Chapter 6. To understand his reasoning better, it is helpful to turn to his book *The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God* (Feazell , 2001).

Feazell grew up and completed his education in the WCG and was involved in Herbert Armstrong’s “back on the track” purge of “liberal” ministers and members in the early 1980s, and remained in the WCG upper echelon during the Tkach Senior administration. He eventually became familiar with evangelical Christian theology during postgraduate studies at Azusa Pacific University. He discovered that he had accepted WCG literature as being “prima facie true,” even before reading it (Feazell, 2001, p.24) due to his early indoctrination. He reveals that he worked in a church environment where some of the leaders were unable to distinguish between literal and figurative language (p.30). He became wary of the entrenchment of “either/or” thinking (p.51), and such personal insight allowed some “incompatibilities” to melt away (p.53) in a sect that had a history of a collective mindset and intolerance of ambiguity (p.71).

Feazell (2001, p.30) reveals some of the background to the eventual adoption of the Trinity doctrine, around 1993.

The discussions about the doctrine of the Trinity were as fascinating as they were tedious. During one discussion about the anthropomorphic references to God on the Old Testament, a panel member asked, “What does ‘figurative’ mean?” What were we supposed to say to that? It is a sad day when a senior

member of a church's doctrinal review team doesn't know the difference between figurative and literal.

Once decided, however, there were "barriers to consensual change on doctrine" (Fezell, 2001, p.115). The effort, in any case, was from the top down:

When Joseph Tkach Sr. came to the point of realizing that the church must change its doctrine of the nature of God and accept the doctrine of the Trinity, the leadership team developed a process that we hoped would ensure a responsible and orderly introduction and implementation of the change.

WCG leaders were exposed to the new doctrinal teaching in a "confidential" arrangement, but "*by the end of the first day of instruction and discussion, confidence had been widely broken and rumor, innuendo, and incomplete and erroneous information were telephoned, faxed, and e-mailed literally all around the world. The entire church was in an uproar ...*" (p.115, italics in original.)

Fezell (2001, p.116) gives several reasons for this outcome (his points have been abbreviated):

- There was already widespread belief among pastors that a Satanic conspiracy was at work among top leadership to destroy the church.
- Only an edict by the hierarchical government of the cult is capable of making such a change in the cult's {sic} doctrine – note that Fezell labels the old WCG a "cult."
- Any potential false move by Tkach provided political cannon fodder for their [that is, Tkach's opponents] desire to see Tkach's leadership undermined or destroyed.
- In the WCG corporate culture even a hint, a mere rumour of change in a core value sent shock waves through the organization. [Many reasoned that] even Armstrong himself had no right to change what God had revealed through him.

Furthermore, the rejection of core doctrines and their replacement by mainstream Christian beliefs undermined the very security of the members, switching back to what they had already repudiated, at great personal cost (Feazell, 2001, p.117).

This tells us a little about the difficulty of introducing change, but nothing about the reasoning process for the change. Feazell's book chronicles disillusionment and despair regarding the WCG's erroneous beliefs, which increasingly surfaced as literature was being reviewed. It seems that many of the early errors detected were of a technical nature, but these eventually amounted to a paradigm implosion. Yet whether there was sound reasoning in the changes or not, for many members it made no difference. Acceptance or rejection of the changes were made on other grounds. For example:

Some members immediately accepted all changes simply because the changes came from Pasadena. They had decided long ago that they would be loyal to "God's government" in the churchThe obvious question, How can God, who is always faithful and true, lead Pasadena into error one day and into truth the next? did not seem to bother them (Feazell, 2001, p.113).

This escape into irrationality (Hoffer, 1951) and surrender to social control (Thompson, 1986) had a long history in the WCG, as members were subjected to several abrupt changes in their beliefs and practices over many decades (for instance, reinterpretation of failed prophecies, the change of the day of observing Pentecost, policies on divorce and remarriage, and so on). Throughout these changes Armstrong and his ministers always emphasized the core imperative: obedience to God was required for salvation, and this was channelled through retention of WCG membership and unquestioning compliance with its (sometimes capricious) regulations and governance. The usual approach to contradiction and change was denial. Apparently, the benefit of RCR was not available to them. This condition is confirmed by Feazell (2001, p.114):

The greatest number of members, however, seemed to be those who just wished the whole thing would go away. Some simply acted as though nothing had really changed. "This isn't really all that different from what we were taught before,"

some reasoned. “I think it’s mostly just a matter of semantics,” was another easy perspective.

The WCG leadership who introduced the Trinity doctrine in 1993 took some time to comprehend the nature of what they now believed. It is not surprising that few, if any, of the members had the inclination or ability to reason through this doctrinal revision and, therefore, the RCR considerations would be at a very basic level. It also appears that little advancement in reasoning took place among some of those responsible for introducing the doctrine, but there are signs of intelligent engagement with the issues and higher levels of RCR are involved in some of the review and exposition of the Trinity doctrine.

There is an element of defensiveness in these admissions, for Feazell (p.100) shows resentment towards those who would doubt the sincerity of the WCG’s transformation and question the continued use of power by the WCG leadership to implement the changes. However, Feazell (p.114) admits that:

Ironically, the same authoritarian governmental structure that created the heretical environment in the first place was necessary to correct it.

Thus the “necessity” of order and compliance seems to have outweighed the liberal provisions of the new belief system, and Feazell’s own role as enforcer of the new order is downplayed. These comments can be moderated by those found in Feazell’s doctoral project (Feazell, 1999), where knowledge of spiritual renewal factors is outlined. Feazell’s project gave attention to necessary changes in the WCG’s values and assumptions (p.5), but also affirmed that some of Armstrong’s key teachings were instrumental in “propelling the doctrinal transformation of his church after his death” (p.6). These foundational positions were (p.6):

- The Bible is the inspired Word of God and must always be the final authority of the church in all matters of faith and practice.
- The Church of God must always be willing to change when it is shown by the Bible to be in error.

The authoritarian approach to changes in belief (leaving aside the matter of spiritual transformation) resulted in an uncertain number of WCG adherents being unable to understand or explain their new beliefs (any more, perhaps, than they could understand and explain their old beliefs). Feazell (2001, p.120) candidly admits that:

If we were to stop teaching the changes right now and invite members to go back to the old doctrines, I am convinced that a certain percentage would do so.

It is suggested that the new WCG might lose its appeal to those who really changed their beliefs and, paradoxically, conservative members who stayed with the WCG due to loyalty to the “true church” may in the future form the majority. There is a cloud of gloom over these predictions – “Our current financial challenges and generally flagging morale may finally prove irreversible” (p.130). This reveals that an uncertain number of WCG members (including ministers) have not really changed their way of thinking, even though they may be subservient to the new regime’s imposition of doctrinal change. There is also the hint – probably unintentional - that the leadership has adopted more mainstream Christian doctrine but with its traditional cultic mindset intact.

Commenting on Feazell’s book, Scott (2002) draws attention to the continuing problematic of Herbert W. Armstrong’s posthumous role in the WCG: despite the demolition of Armstrong’s theological structure, his commitment to the Bible is honoured as his continuing legacy to the WCG (although Armstrong’s considerable misunderstanding and misapplication of the Bible is down-played). For that reason, apparently, criticism of Armstrong is muted in the new WCG possibly because the new leadership share the same platform of authority.

5.8.3 Dr. John E. McKenna, Senior Doctrinal Advisor to the WCG President

In order to comprehend more deeply McKenna’s intellectual contribution to the WCG’s transformation, a brief survey of his background and writing is provided. Details of correspondence in his role as dissertation liaison will not be given. His response to the survey is found in Chapter 6.

McKenna studied physical chemistry at Princeton University, and was awarded Master in Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary, having studied with Dr. James Loder and establishing a friendship with Scottish theologian, T.F. Torrance. McKenna confesses to a long period of involvement with the California “Jesus People” movement in the 1970s but details of his life are obscure. Not mentioned in his writings is his contribution to LaSor, et al.’s *Old Testament Survey* and his ministry with the American Baptist Churches in Pasadena (see McKenna, 1982). After his PhD in 1987 he held various adjunct teaching positions at Fuller and at Azuza Pacific University, and then in 1996 inexplicably became a WCG member, was ordained as a minister and appointed chairperson of the theology department at Ambassador University in Texas. Ambassador closed soon after and from 1997 McKenna returned to Pasadena to become senior editor of WCG publications and doctrinal advisor to the Pastor-General. Concurrent with this, McKenna has held short-term senior appointments (as President and Professor of Old Testament) with Korean-operated unaccredited theological schools (California Graduate School of Theology; World Mission University) but his academic publication record is limited.

McKenna’s involvement in the transformation process is also obscure. He may have met some WCG ministers doing postgraduate studies at Azuza in the early 1990s, and it is suggested that the WCG changes were encouraged in that environment (Feazell, 2001, p.28). However, WCG sources do not credit him with any involvement in their theological ferment. McKenna’s academic experience might have provided theological support for the WCG’s explanation of its reasons for change, and he remains a member of the WCG doctrinal committee. He has been involved in a number of meetings with external observers, and has written some papers available to WCG members. In “Transformations in the history of cosmology” (McKenna, 1998), WCG readers are encouraged “to see the need to overcome dualistic tendencies in our thought” (p.1). This paper is very untypical of WCG literature, the first to be manifestly “philosophical.” An important sentence, relating to human alienation, is:

... freedom and order are bound up together with one another not as some logical contradiction but with the fact that the world in its created freedom and order belongs to rationality of the divine freedom and order of the being and nature of God (pp.5-6)

The paper was issued some five years after the Trinity doctrine was adopted by the WCG, but it does not address the changes in thinking and beliefs of the WCG during that time. Although somewhat impenetrable to the lay reader, McKenna's paper attempts to open up the possibility of worldview changes. Due to its abstract characteristics, the paper is superficially RCR Level 4-5. Whilst holding to a core theistic presence, which provides coherence and meaning to the cosmos, the paper affirms the freedom of humans to hold to different perspectives, even simultaneously, as an expression of the freedom to be what is beyond absolute determination. McKenna argues that, as God is completely free to be God, humanity fulfils its divine purpose by entering into the freedom of God, which is preserved by the Triune nature of God. This liberality of thinking, whilst unsettling to those who need an ordered and regulated existence, encourages appropriate responsiveness to the way the world (cosmos) is unfolding, and encompasses multiple and ever-changing possibilities. Such a viewpoint may have contributed significantly to the WCG's change process, but there is no evidence for it.

“Further up and further in – Trinitarian response” (McKenna, 1999) was more explicit on the Trinity. For example:

God is one and God is the Trinity are not contradictory statements. Given a context defined by the bodily risen and ascended Lord, they are statements of a faith that is {sic} profoundly rooted in the ground of Christ's nature and being (p.1)

Such rhetorical expressions are common in McKenna's writings, but a close and sustained attempt to reason through the statements is not apparent. We note (p.2) imperatives such as:

What impresses itself upon {us?} as a logical contradiction actually refers us to a reality whose rational mode of being cannot be divorced from the Being of God himself. The Worldwide Church of God is duty bound to seek real and fresh resolutions for the problem of the old and the new in the biblical world.

Furthermore, the exposition is not really an argument but a series of statements with a “religious” vocabulary. It suggests that not all members of the WCG are convinced about the possibility of understanding God in Trinitarian terms – McKenna hints that many still “object adamantly.”

McKenna’s doctoral thesis was published as “The setting in life of *The Arbitrator* of John Philoponos” (McKenna, 1997). The ideas of Philoponos, the Grammarian of sixth-century Alexandria are related to the matter of complementarity in the understanding of the nature of God. Christ, as a composite reality, together with the need to reconcile a Messiah with Monotheism, posed logical difficulties and Philoponos is said to have admitted “The whole thing is absolutely impossible ... but nevertheless it is true for those who believe” (p.15). McKenna’s consideration of the logical aspects of Philoponos’s quest to affirm the orthodox understanding of the composition and nature of God found support with Scottish theologian T.F. Torrance. McKenna allies his thinking with Torrance’s so, by association, McKenna’s own thought appears to be highly elevated. Presumably influential on McKenna’s thinking is Torrance’s (2002, p.61) observation, in the context of quantum theory:

... the more deeply we penetrate into the rational structures of nature in its sub-atomic levels the more we find that the universe does not contain within itself a sufficient explanation of its order – it is ultimately elusive and inexplicable in a variability that will not be forced into preconceived patterns of our thought.

Torrance (2002, p.93) is familiar with McKenna’s work and refers to how Philoponos’s dynamic conception of light opened the way to construe energy in relational ways. Philoponos’s thought was expressed in dynamic relational ways, using theological terms in accordance with a reality belonging to a context, thus having “objective reference, and not just in accordance with Aristotelian rules for logical division and classification or some formal system of logical definitions and distinctions” (p.98). This “kataphysic” way of thinking may well be a precursor to Reich’s RCR – but, before that, of “Clerk Maxwell’s adaptation to physics of the kind of onto-relations expressed in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity” (p.100). Philoponos’s work also points to the critical realist school of thought. Torrance (p.105) writes:

Careful thinking in theology and science alike proceeds strictly in accordance with the nature of objective reality of what is being investigated and/or interpreted, that is in accordance with what it really is.

The consequence of this in our theological thought, according to Torrance (p.106), is:

When we turn to inquire of *God* and seek to know him in accordance with his nature, the modality of our reason undergoes a very radical shift, but the scientific method remains the same: knowing him strictly and holistically in accordance with his divine reality and nature. Here human thinking undergoes an epistemic reorientation, a *metanoia*, under the creative and self-revealing impact of God's personal interaction with us. Thus there takes place an epistemological inversion of our knowing relation but in strict accordance with the nature of God as he makes himself known to us.

McKenna and Torrance have been acquainted for some time and Torrance's way of thinking (especially in his works on the Trinity) have special appeal in the present study of the WCG's change of thinking. Torrance's contribution thus lends weight to Reich's assertion that a special kind of thought – RCR – is important for understanding the Trinity and that a change in the way of thinking needs to precede that understanding. McKenna's worldview and way of thinking are, superficially at least, understandable in terms of RCR, probably at the highest level especially as his thoughts are intertwined with (if not just derived from) Torrance's. This is to be expected from someone with a scientific and metaphysical inclination and his familiarity with the issues underlying Reich's theory make him well-placed to explore the implications of the present thesis with WCG officials.

5.9 The current WCG position on the Trinity

From 1998 the WCG could fully subscribe to the Chalcedonian Definition. In "The dual nature of Jesus Christ," Johnston (1998. p.2) states that "Scripture implies that Jesus continues to be fully God and fully human – now God in glorified flesh." This came a long way from the earlier position (Tkach Jr., 1993, p.12) that, following Jesus' glorification, his "human nature has been removed."

The most recent WCG *Statement of Beliefs* (WCG, 2001) was explicitly revised to confirm the WCG's Trinitarian credentials. A new entry, "The Triune God," states the orthodox belief that God "is one divine Being in three eternal, co-essential, yet distinct Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The next entries are called "God the Father," "God the Son," and "God the Holy Spirit." The text appears to be completely orthodox, except for one curious feature. Under "God the Son," nothing is said about Him being the source or conduit of the Holy Spirit. However, under "God the Father," it is stated that He is "from whom the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds through the Son." Under "God the Holy Spirit," it is stated that He is "eternally proceeding from the Father through the Son." These statements clearly indicate that this is not a "double procession," but a stepped procession. The Western creeds require God the Son qua God to be a source of the Spirit, not an instrument of its transmission (for the *filioque*, or double procession, idea see Olson and Hall, 2002, p.52, and for another view, Lorenzen, 1999, p.61). This may well reflect the influence of Stavrinides' original Greek Orthodox background.

However, WCG writer, Michael Morrison (1996, p.4) stated "Based on biblical evidence, the Worldwide Church of God teaches that the Holy Spirit is God in the same way that the Father is God and the Son is God." Likewise, Morrison (2001, p.1) stated that "The Holy Spirit, like the Son and the Father, is God – three Persons perfectly united in one God: the Trinity." How does he explain this tri-unity?

In the world of spirit, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God, unified in a way that material objects cannot be. Our math is based on material things; it does not always work in the infinite, spiritual realm (p.1).

As a form of reasoning, the above is limited to statements based on presumed evidence. It alludes to logical structures but defers engagement with them. WCG scholarship is directed at communicating beliefs to the ordinary member of the public and is usually descriptive, without internal engagement with the constructs at an abstract level. As the new beliefs, such as the Trinity, require more sophistication of expression, WCG writers are now able to access several excellent treatments of the Trinity (Grenz, 2004; Letham, 2004).

Paul Kroll is one of the WCG's principal writers. His "Is the Trinity in the Bible?" (Kroll, 1999a) portrays the Trinity as implicitly taught in the Bible, whereas previously the WCG required explicit statements to that effect. The argument for the Trinity is not fully developed, and relies on the linking of references to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Kroll (p.1) writes, "Certainly, such passages show that the New Testament faith is implicitly Trinitarian. Of course, it's true that none of these passages say directly that 'God is a Trinity ...' or 'This is the Trinitarian doctrine ...' But they don't need to." In "Does the Trinity teach three Gods?", Kroll (1999b, p.2) writes:

If one rejects the theology of the Trinity, he or she has no explanation that preserves the oneness of God – an absolute biblical requirement. That is why Christians formulated the doctrine. They accepted the truth that God was one. But they also wanted to explain that Jesus Christ is also spoken of in terms of divinity in Scripture. And so is the Holy Spirit. The Trinity doctrine was developed precisely with the intent to explain as well as human words and thought would allow how God could be both one and yet three – simultaneously. By admitting plurality into unity, Kroll is able to develop his point to RCR Level 2. Further development of the argument, to take into account connecting elements, was needed to demonstrate a higher RCR level, as in the following example (Kroll, 1999b, p.2):

Using the word "Persons" for the hypostases of God is a compromise. We need a word that emphasizes the personal nature of our God and in some way contains the concept of distinctiveness. Unfortunately, the word "person" also contains the notion of separate-ness when applied to human persons. Trinitarians understand that God is not made up of the kind of persons that a group of people might be. But what is a "God-kind" of person? We have no answer. We use the word "Person" for each hypostasis of God because it is a personal word, and above all, God is a personal being in his dealings with us.

Kroll's (2004) "The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of God Himself," relies heavily on arguments and quotes from Torrance (1996) and thus Kroll's RCR level is indistinguishable from Torrance's. (This is a complicating factor in reviewing any of the WCG leaders, as they have been imbued with the higher level thinking of outsiders on

this topic, without contributing much original thought. This raises the risk of ascribing higher RCR levels to WCG leaders, when it is not merited.) Kroll argues against a view, possibly lingering in the minds of some WCG adherents, that the Holy Spirit “is not personal in the same sense that the Father and Son are personal.” Kroll draws heavily on T.F. Torrance’s *The Christian Doctrine of God* (1996). The Spirit is said to be self-effacing. However, the “Comforter” role, succeeding Christ but through whom Christ’s “face” is seen, lends a personal dimension to the Spirit. Even so, again citing Torrance, these “faces” are to be understood as “imageless relations.” These relations are not disconnected; in other words, the members of the Godhead are not “appendages” to each other. The argument seems to go that, as God is directly involved in the saving work of the Son, so is the Spirit directly involved in that same work, as God in Christ and as Christ as Spirit. These relations are central and essential to human salvation, for the interpenetration of Jesus and his disciples is through the agency of the Spirit. As Kroll (2004, p.6) says: “All three Persons effect the salvation of believers, and all must be true God of true God in order to do so – including the Holy Spirit.”

The above reasoning seems to be consistent with the premises, and the elegance and appeal of this reasoning seems to reinforce the validity of the premise, that is, the Trinity. This circularity is actually a form of complementarity, the premise and conclusions forming a whole, self-sustaining argument. It would be convincing to a believer. But the premises are assumed from the elaborations. This is not to say that the premises are invalid. Overall, the argument is self-validating – in terms of RCR – because it fulfils the considerations at the higher level. It is possible that the Trinity (as explained in the orthodox sense) is not only best explained at the higher level, but is indeed intrinsic to that higher level of RCR. But the thought remains: isn’t this inspired by Torrance’s thinking, which itself is highly complementarist?

To conclude, the WCG’s expositions on the Trinity during the transition period and into the present time are at their best (or highest in terms of RCR levels) when they incorporate or reflect mainstream theological treatises. As the spirit of freedom underlying these treatises becomes more a part of WCG thinking, the WCG leaders will become less reliant on arguments based on authority alone. The movement from ditheism to tri-unity may have been rationalized but no real logical reasons were initially evident in the movement towards or analysis of the Trinity. The switch from

one to another belief appears to have been “intellectualized” but not fully comprehended at the higher levels, as shown in the documents reviewed. There definitely appears to be a growing awareness of the necessity to take account of competing views on the Trinity and the interpretation of sources. There appear to be modest gains in RCR and it is anticipated that higher RCR levels will be attained as the WCG leaders become more familiar with recent Trinitarian scholarship. There are signs of evidence of this, as the WCG continues to educate its membership through publications such as *Christian Odyssey*. For example, the most recent issue involved an interview with Robert F. Capon who, in the context of preaching humility and grace, said “Pure monotheism is dangerous. The doctrine of the Trinity embraces the paradox of mutuality in God himself without violating the unity of God – because it can only be preached as a *paradox* and a *mystery*” (Capon, 2005, p.11). The WCG’s exposure to examples of complementarity thinking, compatible with its new ethos, probably will assist the WCG’s leaders (and general membership) to reflect on their transformation and progress towards higher RCR levels.

5.10 Dissident reactions to WCG changes on the Trinity

What follows is an account of arguments by a number of supporters of the traditional doctrine. In this presentation, the type of reasoning used will become more evident, revealing that the anti-Trinity position was deficient in RCR even though sometimes intelligently expressed. The WCG’s abandonment of its objection to the Trinity, and its cautious acceptance of it, resulted in numerous polemical works refuting the doctrine and questioning the WCG’s motives. The definition of God remains a lively and controversial topic in current ex-WCG circles (see *The Journal*). Analysis of the major dissident groups’ literature on the Trinity reveals their view that there is no “logical” reason for the WCG to have changed its belief.

There is also little sustained reasoning in some of the dissident sources (for instance, Schroeder, 2001), that reiterate a simple version of the old WCG position. Most of the “reasoning” in these items is contained in the quotations drawn from various sources, which are then presented dogmatically. That is, the authors do not themselves appear to use higher levels of reasoning but, in some instances, they do appreciate the higher arguments used by others, especially if they support the author’s

own case. It is often difficult to disentangle the words or ideas drawn from these sources from the author's commentary.

Many anti-Trinitarians appear to assume that the "third Person" of the Trinity is a definitive "being," or operates as a "co-personality" to the Father and Son. One such commentator is the late Dr. Ernest Martin (died 2002), one-time Dean of Theology at Ambassador College. Martin (1991) says that the Chalcedonian Definition was

based on philosophical speculations of the Neo-Platonic school that make them completely inexplicable to the ordinary intelligent person. In fact, there is not a person in the world who can satisfactorily explain what the doctrine of the Trinity is all about (p.10).

This kind of sweeping conclusion by a former teacher of the WCG leaders, even though it recognizes complexity and paradox, could not have encouraged efforts to think through complex beliefs, thus delaying their development towards higher levels of reasoning.

5.10.1 Intercontinental Church of God, founded by Garner Ted Armstrong (1930-2003)

The late Garner Ted Armstrong established this church (ICG), based in Texas, in 2000 and continued to promulgate views consistent with the earlier WCG position. In his *"Is God a mystery?"*, Armstrong (2000) repeats the charge that Satan is behind the Trinity doctrine, as the devil, also known as Lucifer, was a member of a "triumvirate" of spirit beings (p.4), and promotes the Trinity through the "whore of Babylon" (implying the Roman Catholic Church) (p.6). The booklet quotes and ridicules a number of orthodox explanations of the Trinity and, in place of argument, Armstrong cites a number of Bible texts to prove his position that God is two persons. For example, regarding Christ:

He insisted that He and His Father in heaven were "one", which plainly meant to those who heard Him that they were one in agreement, in purpose, in doctrine, in character, and one in spiritual purity! Yet, Christ was on the earth; able to be seen, handled, experienced, and His Father was invisible, in heaven. Nothing

incomprehensible here whatsoever! Certainly, one has no problem seeing that the two “substances” were separate; Christ on earth, and the Father in heaven! (p.12).

The booklet presents several simplistic arguments along these lines, and never goes beyond RCR Level 1. He writes “Everywhere in God’s creation, there is duality” (p.23), and lists examples, but takes both the Father and the Son into account when defining God. Armstrong was indoctrinated in his father’s teachings from an early age and was a prominent exponent of them for a time as Vice President of the WCG. During that time, the Father-Son duality in the Godhead held appeal as Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong presented their own father-son relationship in the ministry as mirroring the divine reality.

5.10.2 Church of God, International, also founded by Garner Ted Armstrong

The *Church of God, International*, started in the late 1970s in Texas, after its founder Garner Ted Armstrong was excommunicated from his father’s church (in 2000, Garner Ted Armstrong was dismissed from this church also, again for moral failings). The CGI continued with the traditional WCG beliefs, as outlined in two booklets by Vance Stinson. These were produced in response to the WCG’s changes re the Trinity. In *God is not a Trinity!* Stinson (1993a) acknowledges that Trinitarians do not believe in three separate Persons (qua Beings) for that would be Tritheism. Stinson knows that the Trinity is not explained as “separate beings,” thus a partitioned God. He knows that the Trinity consists of three “personal distinctions,” or “hypostases,” within the One Being. However, he insists that the biblical image of the Son sitting at the Father’s side, “even if this description is to some extent metaphorical,” actually “pictures *two* distinct Beings” (Stinson, 1993a, p.6).

Stinson (1993a, p.6 asserts that many New Testament scholars (they are not named, but Stinson would be supported, in part, by Letham, 2004) admit “that the writers of the New Testament never thought in Trinitarian terms. They clearly saw the Father and the Son as two divine Beings, not as *hypostases* within one Being. The trinitarian interpretation requires that one read forced and unnatural meanings into passages that were written for people with ordinary abilities in comprehension and

understanding.” Stinson (p.7) also relies on popular Greek writer Spiros Zodhiates in support of the view that God is a “family.” Stinson (p.13) appeals to “natural reasoning” which would not arrive at a Trinitarian conclusion. Regarding the Logos, Stinson (p.22) claims that John’s thought was drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures, where the Angel of the Lord was God’s Spokesman; not the later Hellenistic view of Logos as Reason, or personification of a principle which could be drawn into a Trinitarian view of God. Stinson’s view is that the Logos-Spokesman was a distinct divine being. Stinson (pp.38-39), following John 6:25, points out that Jesus admitted speaking (about the coming of the Comforter) in “proverbs” or figurative language, but meant more plainly (as in John 14:18-23) that He and the Father would come. Therefore, “Jesus’ description of the Comforter, then, was *figurative language* for the spiritual presence of God, both Father and Son.” Stinson (1993a, p.43) argues that, ultimately, the authority of the historic Christian church is the source of the Trinity doctrine, and is a belief based on a political majority vote.

The above booklet was supported by *Who, what, is God?* (Stinson 1993b, p.10), which comments on the WCG changes, but is now out-dated.

In recent times ... the WCG has adopted a concept that resembles Trinitarianism. The leaders of that organization now speak of the Father and the Son as “consciousnesses” within God, but are unclear as to whether they believe the Holy Spirit is a distinct “consciousness”. They claim that the word “person”, when used of one of the “consciousnesses” within God, is a weak metaphor, and have renounced their long-held belief that God is a Family.

Stinson is more cautious than the other authors and comes close to an interim position later adopted by the WCG, it seems, especially in regard to the “composite unity” implied by the word *Elohim* (Stinson, 1993b, p.14). Stinson (p.33) writes:

Should we accept the biblical descriptions of Jesus Christ sitting at His Father’s right hand as a “human way” of understanding the functions of two “personal distinctions” interacting within one Being who is not composed of “parts”? Or should we accept the more natural understanding of one Being existing side-by-side, and in perfect unity, with another Being?

Stinson (1993b, p.35) seems to assert that One God can be many Beings ... since “‘God’ is a *kind* of Being.” That is, God is a kind of Being that “can exist as more than one Person.” Whilst not pressing the “family” definition of *Elohim*, Stinson refers to the wide application of the Family concept – not just metaphor - to the Godhead. Instead of immediately dismissing claims for the Personality of the Holy Spirit, Stinson (p.48) examines them on the basis of God’s omnipresence. The argument seems to be leading to this: If God is present everywhere, and He is Personal, why is another Person (that is, the Holy Spirit) necessary? It may be possible to say that the Holy Spirit is God’s presence (and “God” can mean either the Father and/or the Son) – and because God is thus personally present, his Spirit is likewise personal – but not necessarily a distinct Person (understood, perhaps, as a “Being”). It would be wrong to think of the Holy Spirit as a “separate Being” in any case. The most significant passage (p.49) is this:

When we understand the Holy Spirit as God’s invisible presence and activity within the natural world, we can easily understand why the scriptural writers so often gave personal attributes to the Spirit. Since “Holy Spirit,” or “Spirit of God,” refers to God’s spiritual presence (through intervention) within the natural world, *it is incorrect to say that the Holy Spirit is nothing more than an impersonal force, or that the personal pronouns “He” and “Him” cannot be appropriately used when speaking of the Spirit.* This, however, does not mean that the Holy Spirit is the “Third Person” of the Godhead [italics added].

The above attempts to deal with at least two aspects of the problem – God as One, and the Spirit as God, thus resulting in RCR Level 2. This is raised to Level 3 in that Stinson allows that both positions are needed, as implied in Scripture. The link between God, Spirit and personal presence brings Stinson’s thinking up to RCR Level 3-4. The overlap is due to the firm presence of Level 3 elements, such as a focus on the positions taken into account but without their full explanation. That is, the unexamined aspects of the position are taken up into the higher level, resulting in under developed relationships. At Level 3, Stinson admits that neither God as One, nor God is Spirit only, is correct, but there is no *explicit* analysis of the relationship. Even more problematic is the issue of whether there is perception of context dependency of the explanation. Part of the above quote has been italicized to show the closeness of

Stinson's argument to orthodox belief on the Trinity. The personality of the Holy Spirit is admitted, thus there is nothing to prevent Stinson from becoming a Trinitarian except for his retention of an inadequate understanding of Person. This is an impediment to a full designation as RCR Level 4.

It seems that the dispute rests on an interpretation of the distinctions in the Godhead. Stinson probably would allow – based on the above reasoning – that when God is present in the Person of the Holy Spirit, this itself constitutes the distinction. That is, it is a distinction because God is not at that instant present as Father or Son. In fact it is necessary to have this distinction because the Father qua Father is “in heaven” (Matthew 23:9), and the Son is said to “return” at a later time. In the meantime, the Son promises “I will be with you always” (Matthew 28:20, New International Version) but also has “ascended up on high” (Ephesians 4:8). It is possible that the root of this problem may lie in the beginning premise – that each distinction (Person) is a “distinct Being.” That is, God is not two Beings in One, but One Being who is also Two (or more) Persons. However, these Persons are not modes of the same Being. If Stinson is able to conclude that the Holy Spirit is a third “Person” - but not a third “Being” - within the Godhead, and takes this to its logical conclusion along orthodox lines, there are signs that his position could adapt to the Trinity. Stinson's intelligently reasoned account demonstrates a high RCR level, at least Level 3-4, even though his conclusions differ from traditional Trinitarianism.

5.10.3 United Church of God, an International Association

This is a prominent WCG schismatic group, founded by several leading WCG ministers soon after the Trinity doctrine was introduced, and is based in Ohio. As it incorporates a large number of former WCG members, the UCG regards itself as the legitimate continuation of Armstrong's church. It affirms its belief in “one God, the Father” and in Jesus Christ, “who has eternally existed ... the Son of the living God,” and in “the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and of Christ” (UCG, 1998, p.2). The relationship between the Father and the Son is one of unity but with distinction. The word God can be applied to either. “The Holy Spirit of God is not identified as a third person in a trinity, but is consistently described [in scripture] as the power of God” (p.4).

In “Who is God?” (UCG, 2001), the biblical basis for belief is emphasized, but the authors are limited by their interpretive horizon. For example, the Gospel of John’s prologue, “the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” leads the author to conclude that “If you are *with* someone, then you are *other than* and separate from that person. John clearly describes *two* divine personalities in this passage” (p.8), so “then, we have *two* great personages ... presiding over the Creation” (p.8). This idea of separate divine personalities (both of which are God) implies the co-existence of two God beings. The rest of the booklet represents the old WCG position that God is a plurality in unity. The case for this is supported by numerous Bible verses, giving the whole argument some plausibility but within this limited framework and dependent on the author’s foundational views and interpretive schema, without engagement with alternative scholarship. *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Richardson, 1969 edition), is cited (p.48) to show that at the time of the Trinity’s formulation there were some who thought in binitarian terms, as though this minority view carried more weight than the Trinitarian (although see Letham, 2004). There is a kind of plausible logic that arises from arguing only from Bible verses but the hermeneutical basis for this is made invisible. It does not admit the multiple views of others who likewise have enjoined their intellect with the same texts and have arrived at other conclusions. Therefore, at a macro level, the position taken by this booklet is idiosyncratic, and at RCR Level 1.

5.10.4 Philadelphia Church of God, founded by Gerald Flurry

The WCG’s changes were strongly opposed by the *Philadelphia Church of God*, which broke from the WCG in the mid 1990s. It is led by Gerald Flurry, former WCG pastor from Oklahoma and self-proclaimed successor to the Apostle Armstrong. After a lengthy law suit, this sect obtained the rights to republish Herbert Armstrong’s final opus, *Mystery of the Ages*. But Flurry’s main textbook, *Malachi’s Message* (Flurry, 1995), does not explicitly deal with the Trinity, although it does refer to distinct Persons in the Godhead. The separateness of the Father and Son (as separate Beings, the Son being subordinate to the Father) is revealed in the following (Flurry, 1995, p.51):

Now the WCG teaches that “Christ is the central figure of the Gospel”. That is tragically unbiblical! The Kingdom of God is the FAMILY of God. And

who is the head of the Family? Christ? Of course not! The Father is the head of the Family. God the Father is the central figure of the Gospel!

There is no compromise in Flurry's writings and very little sign of complex reasoning. By setting up a rigid hierarchy – God, Christ, others – Flurry “overshadows” Christ's role in the relational Godhead, and therefore limits his thinking to RCR Level 1.

5.10.5 Restored Church of God, founded by David Pack

Another contender for Armstrong's mantle is David Pack, also a former WCG pastor. His *Restored Church of God*, based in Ohio, has republished many of Armstrong's writings, and is very critical of the WCG's motives for changing its doctrines. In this section, we are able to preview some of the incongruous aspects of the WCG's transition period, in regard to their thinking about the Trinity.

In *The Trinity: Is God three-in-one?* (Pack, 2002), a key objection seems to be based on this – “The Trinity doctrine appeals to so many because it teaches that Christ and the Holy Spirit work *in our stead*, rather than Christ working in us by the Holy Spirit's *power*. It relieves “Christians” of the need to do *anything* – other than just “accept Jesus” (p.6). Other key objections are that “The Trinity denies and limits the nature of God ...” ... who “is a Family,” which involves “God is reproducing Himself, expanding His Family with many sons These sons (and daughters) – Christians – are begotten by God's Holy Spirit, which empowers them to develop godly character” (p.7). The “personhood” of the Holy Spirit then is replaced with “agency” – both as means of conception and means of sanctification. The latter is understood as power to obey God, thus developing “character.” This is classic Armstrongism (Tucker, 1989).

The assumption is that the Three-in-One of Trinitarianism is divisible – “How could one-third of one Being *die*? Likewise, how could two-thirds of one Being *resurrect* the other third of itself?” (Pack, 2002, p.19). The booklet asserts that the Trinity doctrine requires that “the Holy Spirit is ‘one third’ of the Godhead.” Thus “Three-in-One” is understood as three separate Beings linked together. This caricature is not the orthodox Trinitarian position but is obviously polytheistic. The booklet continues: “If the Holy Spirit is one person, then, logically, he can only be present in

one person at a time.” This quote assumes that the word “person” equates with a single individual. “We have shown that the Holy Spirit is neither one-third of a single, amorphous god-being, nor a separate entity of a three-member godhead” (p.23). This was reasoned through biblical exegesis (that is, based on the assumption that a person is a unit). Also the reasoning is that, as the Holy Spirit is powerful and imparts power, it is power. The underlying assumption is that the Holy Spirit is not God, but is God’s power, an extension of God. That is, “personhood” somehow separates the Godhead into separate god-beings, yet personhood is not denied to Christ. The obvious conclusion is that the Father and Son are two separate persons, therefore two separate Beings. This is classic binitarianism. The booklet presents an either/or position, somewhat dogmatically. There is no engagement of the relationship between the members of the Godhead, in terms of classic Trinitarian thought. “Proof texts,” probably taken out of context, are used to argue the anti-Trinity position.

A more extensive treatment is given in *There came a falling away* (Pack, 2003). This book catalogues 280 changes that the WCG made since Herbert Armstrong died. It reveals interesting developments in the change of the Trinity doctrine. Pack (p.65) quotes from a letter by David Hunsberger, WCG Personal Correspondence writer, to a WCG member, dated 23 September 1993:

We [ie.The WCG] are teaching a form of the Trinity, though not the exact variations of the concept that have been commonly taught. We find flaws in most Trinitarian teachings that we are attempting to avoid. The word “trinity” originally meant “three” and we have always believed that the one God is somehow three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit as mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 28:19.

Then Pack (2003, p.67) quotes the late Joseph W. Tkach (Armstrong’s successor) in a message to WCG ministers (*Pastor General’s Report*, dated 27 August 1993):

Another heresy is the idea that ... the one God is sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Spirit, *but not all three all the time.*

Pack's comment on this: "Where was the Father when Christ was on the earth? And if God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit were, sort of, "Siamese triplets," how could one-third of one being die? By this definition, mankind has no Savior. We have a Christ who stayed alive, inextricably bound into a three-in-one godhead, with what must have only been a "discarded body" when He died."

The time when the WCG first contemplated a change in their Trinity doctrine is uncertain, but Pack (2003, p.69) implies that it was much earlier than admitted and refers to WCG Greek scholar, Dr. Stavrinides' statement in *Reviews You Can Use* (Jan-Feb 1991), already quoted above.

The Worldwide Church of God teaches the full divinity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – the biblical foundation for all Trinitarian discussions.

Pack (2003, p.69) comments on this:

The above quotes reveal an astonishing sequence of events. They were written and prepared in 1991 as the official public position of the Worldwide Church of God on the doctrine of the trinity {sic}. This was a full two and a half years before it was admitted to the brethren for the first time. The incredible truth this picture represents is that Church leadership had carefully and deliberately planned years ago to make this change while denying it over and over to the Church. Anyone who tried to say that the new teaching that God was three hypostases in one being was the trinity {sic} was deemed a rumormonger and liar.

Then there is a lengthy quote from David Hulme (then WCG Director of Communications and Public Affairs, now the leader of another sect, *Church of God, an International Community*) given at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School meeting in 1991. The "spin" on the withdrawal of Herbert Armstrong's book *Mystery of the Ages* is that it was mostly a rehash of earlier literature, a "catalog of the major beliefs of the Church." Armstrong "considered that work to be in need of revision ... But then he died," and "We were already in the process of making a number of changes ..." Hulme

then stated that “Shortly after Herbert Armstrong’s death, Joseph Tkach organized a senior group of Worldwide Church of God ministers into a doctrinal review team” and referred to the “degree of influence” on WCG by external theologians and religious scholars, but was not specific. Hulme also stated that “We recently issued a new paper on the subject of the Trinity, which was drafted by a senior Church minister who is a graduate of the University of London ...”. Pack (2003, p.71) then cites from Stavrinides’ paper:

The Worldwide church of God has made all biblical truths an indispensable part of its teaching including the teaching that God is one but not the specific way in which God is one, which is entirely a philosophical matter. It teaches the full divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but it does not argue whether God is an essential, a personal, or a super-personal being in the way these terms are used by theologians ... (italics in original)

Pack (2003, p.71) then notes that by 1994, a WCG publication (“We’re Often Asked”) was able to state unambiguously: “The triune nature of God is an essential part of Worldwide Church of God doctrine.” Pack also quotes Joseph W. Tkach’s Letter to the Ministry (*Pastor General’s Report*, 8 June 1994) – “Concerning the nature of God, for example, we used to teach what amounted to a polytheistic view: two God beings.” However, the July 1994 *Plain Truth* magazine, in an article called “God is...”, states – “At first glance, the concept of ‘one in three’ and ‘three in one’ appears illogical to human reason. Yet we believe it, even though it is not simple or easy to explain, because the Bible reveals it.” Pack (2003, p.73) contends that the WCG began formulating the Trinitarian position several years before admitting it to the membership. Pack reveals that Phillip Arnn of the Watchman Expositor (an anti- “cult” ministry) explains why a full admission took so long. What follows is from an interview between Arnn and Dr. D. Kennedy (“Truths That Transform”, 1993), cited in Pack (p.73). Arnn says:

Many of their top ministers are attending bible schools outside of the church and are being exposed to orthodox theology. They are bringing these doctrines, these new doctrinal understandings, back into the church and actually changing church doctrine But at the same time, to make such a drastic change, they

are concerned that they're going to lose a lot of members *So they are actually telling the members that they are not making any changes whatsoever, but that they're just explaining the old doctrines in a different way So they have to use a different language with the membership, than they are with the orthodox Christian community* (italics by Pack).

Pack (2003, p.74) as proof of the above alleged duplicity refers to a statement made by Tkach Senior - "We do not believe the doctrine of the Trinity" (J.W. Tkach Sr, "Personal", *Worldwide News*, 22 July 1991). The point is that the WCG at that time admitted the "divinity" of the Holy Spirit and the "unity" of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but balked at using the word "Trinity." The above account reveals something about the introduction of the new doctrine – apparently there is a time-lag between the WCG's implicit Trinitarianism of 1991 (where the "personhood" of the Holy Spirit is not yet resolved, although the "divinity" and "unity" are accepted), and the explicit Trinitarianism of 1994. It appears that the interim phase was explained in terms of semantic shifts – so in 1994 the WCG could claim that they had always had the basis of a Trinity doctrine but misunderstood the language needed (and were hesitant to use orthodox language because of its supposed origins in paganism). Once the paganism link was discarded, there was no reason to reject the orthodox language. The chronological account by Pack is intended to construe that the WCG introduced the Trinity doctrine by stealth, and with duplicity, in its progressive account of the doctrine. Pack does not engage with the belief seriously and his writings demonstrate the character of either/or thinking, that is, RCR Level 1.

5.10.6 Church of God, The Eternal, founded by Raymond C. Cole (died 2001)

The *Church of God, The Eternal* (CGE), broke from the WCG in the early 1970s and is based in Oregon. Its founder, the late Raymond Cole, was a senior minister in the WCG, and one of Armstrong's first students. Cole was committed to Armstrong's original teachings and refused to compromise when liberalization or necessary changes occurred. The CGE produced *The Trinity and the Nature of God* in 1995, as a response to the WCG's "apostasy" from its original teachings. The 80 page paper draws from about 50 historical and modern (but not recent) theological works, and attempts to demonstrate the futility of using reason to support the Trinity doctrine. It says that "...

there are aspects about God which cannot be known and ... human reasoning, philosophical speculation, and argumentation are useless devices in the attempt to penetrate this barrier” (CGE, 1995, p:v).

Most critics of the Trinity rely heavily on Old Testament motifs of God and are unwilling to admit the later philosophical ideas. According to the CGE (1995, p.2), the terms of the debate are misleading:

What was eventually adopted in the fifth century was not the doctrine of the Trinity (which means three, implying a plurality of gods) but of Triunity (God is one while at the same time consisting of three persons) There is difficulty defining and defending the doctrine of the Trinity, not so much in the threeness once it has been admitted into thought, but in preserving the unity along with it. At all stages of its development belief has been closer to Triunity than to a Trinity.

The CGE’s argument is that it is not a matter of defining the relation with each other of the members of the Trinity but how humans conceive of and explain those relations, in order to accept or reject the doctrine. The CGE recognizes the psychology of the matter and the role of the Cappadocian Fathers (later to strongly influence Augustine). As students of Origen, and following Plato and Aristotle, “they created a league between Faith and Science in the doctrine of the Trinity.” Thus “The end result was that the doctrine of the Trinity was a compromise between Judaism and Hellenism.” Cole may have understood that the Trinity was the product of complementarity thinking, but he may have rejected it because he preferred the biblical account. The CGE (1995, p.9) cites Harnack, a representative of an older school of Biblical interpretation, to argue that “The Cappadocian theologians taught that the Christian idea of God was the true average between Greek and Jewish thought.” The CGE (1995, pp.14-15) goes on to refer to “the Third Divine Principle or the doctrine of the World Soul Thus the Holy Spirit was accorded the idea of the Third Principle These three Principles were sometimes called three Divine Hypostases in the Greek schools and taken together were regarded as one divinity.”

The CGE paper proceeds to acknowledge the uncertainty about strict monotheism in the Judaic tradition, especially in the First century. The author is open to complex relationships between the manifestations of God, but is not convinced that a traditional Trinitarian conceptualization is inevitable. Furthermore (CGE, 1995, p.28), the traditional view of Judaic Monotheism is questioned, given recent (obscure) scholarship that suggests a plurality of spirit beings, over which God is supreme, although there are two major powers in heaven. This adds weight to a duality (or binitarian) position, rather than strict Monotheism – which has dominated the debate so far. This is to some extent connected with views of a Messiah – “son of man” – with which Jesus may have identified, to confirm his membership of a God plane pre-existence. But to make him an equal member of a monotheistic “Godhead” may not be necessary if such an entity did not in fact exist. The problem for later theologians was to squeeze Jesus into a post-exilic One God that must accommodate another divine Being (Jesus). In the same way, yet another divine Being (the Holy Spirit) has to be accommodated into the One God. According to the CGE (pp.30-31), the earlier view seemed to be that various divine Beings were “complementary” to each other and later Rabbinic tradition disguised the divine duality (or Two Gods) by personifying ideals – “Justice and Mercy.”

What follows seeks to argue that the Trinity is an unnecessary formulation, seeking to preserve a One God belief that has been misunderstood. From these arguments, the impression given is that a high level of RCR is useful in conceiving of both the Trinity and also the alternative – that God is One but in two Beings. This raises the possibility that competing beliefs can have similar high RCR levels and that high RCR thinking does not necessarily lead to Trinitarianism. There are other forms of pluralism, as the CGE (1995, p.32) goes on to show:

The monotheism of rabbinic orthodoxy is not a valid basis from which to construct the earliest Christian beliefs ... There is some indication that Jewish monotheism was able to accommodate surprising kinds of reverence for and interest in other heavenly figures such as chief angels, exalted patriarchs, and personified attributes or powers of God. This more complex picture of Jewish monotheism in the first century makes it understandable how Christians could

view the risen Christ as exalted while holding belief in one God. The inability to understand this fact is due to an incorrect and rigid view regarding monotheism.

This appears to suggest that the early church could not incorporate Christ into a strict monotheism unless the divine realm was already capable of expansion. On the matter of multiple divinities, Witherington and Ice (2002, p.68) regard this as a “violation of the tradition,” although these mainstream authors are able to present an extensive examination of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without any explicit reference to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Inherent in the CGE’s argument is the recognition of a spirit population that has no independent existence apart from God, and to which it is not necessary to give personal membership of the Godhead. All of these identities (and Christianity recognizes personages in this angelic realm) would be “holy spirit” (except, of course, for the unholy, demonic spirits). This position would allow Christ to have special status or closeness to the Godhead, and to have the spiritual attributes derived from the Godhead, without the necessity of Christ being in a “relationship” with what he consists. This line of argument dispenses with the need for a third God persona, as the Father and the Son in their identities already give personality to the Spirit. This position does not necessarily equate with “two Gods,” as the complex spiritual relationship between Father and Son would be similar as is thought to be the case in Trinitarianism, where the mutual Spirit of the Godhead is mysteriously transformed into another “Person.” Whilst the CGE’s position is interesting it does not engage with the historical distinctions between “Persons” and “Beings,” with the result that the CGE finds itself holding to what amounts to a “Two Gods” theology.

The CGE’s position seems to be at RCR Level 4, in its explanation of one God, two Persons, within an expanded form of monotheism. The two “gods”, Father and Son, share godhood but are distinct persons, and their spatial-temporal location in spiritual terms gives their presence the standing that a “Holy Spirit” personage would have. That is, the Father when “here” is the Holy Spirit whilst the Son, at the same time over “there,” is also the Holy Spirit. These positions are also fulfilled by lesser, created “personages” who consist of “holy spirit.” Whilst all these “personages” have separate, albeit derivative, existence their relationship to one another is interdependent, and is

particularly affected by context. It is a sophisticated alternative to orthodox Trinitarianism.

The CGE (1995, p.34) goes on to argue that, “Until Christianity tried to fit the Holy Spirit into the picture, it did not deviate as far as one might think from a well-established pattern in Judaism.” This is a valid point, supported by Letham (2004). Therefore, “Behind the debates of councils and the framing of creeds was the binitarian devotion practice of generations of Christians who revered Christ along with God in ways that amounted to a mutation of monotheism,” and “The truth is Paul had received a tradition that the preexistent Son had been sent to the world that He might be the firstborn of many sons of God.” (CGE, 1995, p.36).

As the present thesis is attempting to examine the type of thinking involved in conversion to Trinitarianism, note that the CGE (1995, p.39) suggests that later Trinitarian thought required “conceptual tools” not available to primitive Christianity, which explains the absence of Trinitarian thinking then, and the prominence of binitarian thinking in the earliest church. Trinitarianism’s heavy reliance on metaphors and figurative language is identified as a weakness leading to unresolvable speculation. In opposition to this, the CGE (p.53) recommends the acceptance of the Bible “literally and at face value,” as “the authoritative Word of God.” Despite the arguments against anthropomorphism, the CGE asserts that humanity is literally like God; that is, in shape and form, and in numerous ways, although not immortal. This disputes the argument that God (with all godly characteristics) is a projection of humanity. The CGE (1995, p.64) objects to the displacement of the plain text of the Bible, by allegory and literary devices. The CGE objects to the Trinity being called “revealed,” for it is plainly a historical and philosophical derivation, with inherent contradictions. The CGE (p.64) also claims that the “threeness” (of the Trinity or anything) is an arbitrary position and requires complex interrelationships. “There is no way to overcome the paradox that we must think of God as one and as a society.” This is possibly RCR Level 2, in that it allows for some diversity in the God formulation.

Regarding the basis for Trinitarian belief, for example, “hypostases,” the CGE (1995, p.66) draws attention to various translations and usages in the New Testament. The CGE asserts that *hypostasis* is better understood as “foundation,” rather than

“essential nature.” It is claimed that it is this latter usage, derived from Hellenism, which is relied on to support the Trinity doctrine. The CGE’s qualifications in Greek are unknown (and the source of his assertion is undisclosed), but it can be contrasted with the conventional view that hypostasis “means the individual existence of a particular nature” (Moltmann, 1981, p.171).

Although their qualifications in Hebrew are also unknown, the CGE (1995, p.66) writers assert that the *Shema* (in Deuteronomy 6:4) as translated is said to be misleading. Instead of meaning “Hear - there is one God” (which implies a singular deity) it should mean “Hear (obey) God only” (which places emphasis on who to obey, and does not rule out multiple deity). In the latter instance, it allows for Christ and God to be one (Mark 12:29; John 10:30) and overcomes monotheistic objections to Christ’s deity. “The apostles all agree in representing the personal, spiritual God, the righteous, loving Yahweh of the Old Testament.” Yahweh was also identified as the pre-existent Jesus, who was worshipped as such. This God was the focus of New Testament belief and early Christian adoration. Why was it necessary to change this view? The CGE (1995, p.67) continues to assert that various “texts reveal two Gods in the Old Testament. Trinitarians later added a third God and utilized these texts to show a plurality in the Godhead.”

There is therefore agreement between the CGE and Trinitarians that Old Testament texts reveal plurality in the Godhead. However, and this is the case throughout many ex-Armstrongite anti-Trinitarian tracts, the major difference is that for Trinitarians the plurality is limited to Father, Son and Holy Spirit (co-equal). But for the CGE the plurality consists of God and Lord, or Father and Son, alone. The Holy Spirit is not a “person”. Furthermore, the limitation to three members is rejected; God is now two, but will be more, which is what Christians will become (“Sons of God” in more than a metaphorical sense). The opposition is between a closed Trinity and a Family of Two (and eventually more).

How does RCR work in the CGE’s paper? Its position is fairly complex, but the pro-Trinitarian argument is more internally complex, demanding a non-linear or non-sequential logic. It deals with internal (intra) relations, whereas the Ditheistic position involves more inter-relations – Father and Son primarily, but this does not exclude a

relational dimension involving the Spirit. This makes possible some internal relations, in that the same Spirit acts as a “bridge” between the Father and Son. The CGE (1995, p.69) suggests that the “Spirit of God” is the resurrected Christ. Also:

The Spirit of God is not distinct from God, nor does the term imply a distinction in the Godhead. The Spirit of God is God himself living, acting, and energizing in the world. It can only be regarded as personal because God is personal ... The Spirit can be conceived as God’s inner being itself, a kind of heavenly power with its own identity (p.69).

The CGE concludes that the problem lies in the “personalising of relations” (p.70). That there are relations within the Godhead is not denied, but the relations themselves are personal, not “persons.” By limiting personality to the Father and Son, the CGE cannot admit personality to the Holy Spirit, for that would result in three Gods. For the CGE there can only now be two Gods, within the one Godhead.

Personal discussion with Cole in 1984 revealed his inclination to an ordered worldview, with precise examination of sources. But this positive quality was hindered by Cole’s unfamiliarity with, or possible resistance to, advanced contemporary scholarship on the Trinity. This definitely limited the development of his thinking in terms of complementarity, a term with which he was familiar, and entrenched his viewpoint in either/or, authoritarian, positions out of a rigid respect for Herbert Armstrong’s divine mandate for revealing God’s truth. This was an unhelpful feature of Cole’s personality as he refused to change when Armstrong himself modified a number of WCG doctrines. Cole, through the Church of God, The Eternal, has presented strong reasons for his views, at many places consistent with higher RCR levels, even though holding to theological conclusions unacceptable to mainstream Christianity.

5.10.7 Christian Churches of God, coordinated by Wade Cox

This organization, headquartered in Canberra, Australia, has a web site (www.ccg.org) giving the impression of a growing international association of congregations although that cannot be verified because of the private character of this organization . A large number of papers on topics dealing with relatively esoteric

matters, including many on the Trinity, are on-line (CCG, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b) These papers show evidence of prodigious labour in Biblical and historical studies, with dogmatic conclusions. As they are un-refereed, and as Cox's academic or theological qualifications are unknown, their credibility is untested. The assumed author (Cox) has had some association with the WCG in the past, but appears to have taken up Unitarian and messianic Judeo-Christian beliefs.

Since this group is marginal to the main body of former WCG ministries, a limited review of one item, "Binitarianism and Trinitarianism" (CCG, 2000a), will be attempted because it professes to deal with the logic of these topics. The paper takes a stance against both of these options. The paper relies on numerous sources, some obscure, and goes into detail unnecessarily, a feature which interrupts the coherence of any argument.

A point of interest is the claim that Binitarianism "is logically absurd and conveys within its structure the logical inevitability of Trinitarianism" (p.2). The author cites respected theologians, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, and conjectures about a number of matters rather haphazardly and possibly out of context. There is an element of paranoia prevalent in this paper ("These ministers appearing as angels of light will seek to persecute you", p.7). Regarding the "illogical position of Trinitarianism", the paper states:

Some Trinitarians attempt to deny that God is a Being hoping thereby to introduce some additional vagary to defend against the charges of being illogical, which they defend by declaring the whole thing a mystery. The denial of the term *Being* to God and Christ effectively denies their existence, which is absurd (p.8).

The paper is referred to here only to illustrate the type of material some former WCG members encounter, further confusing them. There was a disorder of thought in Cox's paper, making any analysis of the presence of RCR futile.

5.10.8 Associated Churches of God, founded by Ken Westby

The Association for Christian Development, an arm of the ACG based in Seattle, Washington, has sponsored a series of “One God” seminars, the presenters at which included several former WCG pastors, teachers and administrators, including authors Buzzard and Hunting (1998). The principal stance of the organizers is that of Unitarianism. The content of presentations was superficially impressive but none of the presenters were in the mainstream of theological education or had published works of a recognized academic standard. It is likely that some mainstream New Testament scholars will have some reservations about some claims made in these papers, but the presenters make telling points against the old Armstrong doctrines of God which were devised by individuals untrained in biblical languages (Buzzard, 2003, p.11)

Buzzard (2003) addresses the problem on reconciling singularity and plurality. “The fundamental problem remains for all subscribers to the Trinity or Binity {sic} as to how Three X’s can be one X. This is logically impossible” (p.12). Furthermore, “no one has ever been able to explain in what sense they mean God is *one* and in what *different* sense *more than one*” – and Armstrong’s neologism, “uniplural,” for Elohim is unsupported by Hebrew scholars. Buzzard examines analogies, such as “In the phrase ‘one tripod,’ is it not obvious that one really implies three? Does not one dozen mean that one is really 12?”, and concedes the “madness” of taking “one zebra” as a word that “really means ‘black and white’”. Buzzard objects to tampering with the meaning of a compound noun, and refers to numerous linguistic and exegetical errors allegedly made by supporters of the Trinity. Apart from the above illustrations, there was no material amenable to analysis in terms of RCR. Much of the paper consisted of lengthy quotes from other sources.

Another presenter, Charles Hunting (2003), formerly a senior WCG official, stated that “It would be reasonable to assume that one Father plus one Son should equal two Gods. In this formula the rules of logic, language or mathematics are not assaulted. To insist that ‘they,’ two separate beings, are one being may be made acceptable from a speculative theological point of view, but does it have any meaning in reality? Can one be two or two be one?” (p.56). This statement was left hanging, without further development in terms of logic and thus was unamenable to analysis in terms of RCR.

Also looked for were any references to complementarity, in any of the presentations, but none were found.

5.11 Summary of RCR in the above examples

What, then, can be deduced from the above accounts in regard to the operation of RCR in the thinking of those who retain the old WCG doctrines? The detail of the statements is not a fruitful source of such evidence, as much as is desired. However, the general character of the statements is indicative of a struggle to come to terms with internal relationships in complex concepts. There seems to be a degree of reliance on arguments for the existence of discrete entities, or “Beings.” In some cases, the relations between such entities have been expressed with a degree of complexity, and the content the intra-conceptual relationships may be stated descriptively, but what is lacking overall is an engagement with the logical intra relationships within the Trinity. To the extent that the above authors are able to accept complexity (but not paradox) in the existence of several God beings, but not Triunity, RCR may be said to be present to a limited degree.

Discerning RCR in the conflict of Binitarian with Trinitarian positions is not the main agenda, but the purpose is to examine the formulations that lead to either position. It seems that the Binitarian position – as opposed to the Unitarian – requires a certain level of RCR in order to make its case, and this is about Level 2. This obviously is not a precise categorization, and many of the authors gave descriptive accounts, made dogmatic statements, or quoted from other sources which could not be encompassed within the RCR theoretical framework. It can be suggested that few of the contributors to this chapter displayed prominent or consistent signs of RCR in their arguments. If present, the level was low (1-2), very occasionally RCR Level 3-4. This is consistent with Reich’s claim that doctrines such as the Trinity, to be satisfactorily understood, require an RCR level in the upper range. However, it is also evident that a low level of RCR is sufficient for knowing something about the Trinity doctrine, although explanations of it may be somewhat distorted, even bizarre. The preceding will be useful as contextualized examples of reasoning by WCG and associated individuals, in preparation for the more focussed inquiry described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

Results of Study 2:

Analysis of responses to a survey of Worldwide Church of God leaders in regard to their understanding of the Trinity, in terms of Relational and Contextual Reasoning

6.1 Responses

In December 2003, an introductory letter and questionnaire (**Appendix E**) were transmitted by email to 36 leaders of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in North America, Britain and Australia. Twelve responses were received from North America and one from Britain. A telephone call was received from a very senior WCG official, Dr. Hoeh. Only two of the WCG's most senior leadership (Dr Tkach and Dr Feazell) responded to the survey questions. In each case, respondents completed a set of preliminary questions that probed their type of response, then they answered a series of questions designed to elicit their thinking on the Trinity. General hermeneutical and abductive comments are made in each case, as outlined in the Methodology chapter. Where appropriate, observations in line with RCR expectations are given.

All respondents except one have provided written consent to be identified in this thesis. However, out of respect for all respondent's sensitivities and reputation their names have not been identified in the assessment of their responses. Respondents have not been informed of each other's identities, but they may inadvertently recognize other respondents. Their identities are kept in confidential files in the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, following agreed upon ethics protocols. Where questionnaire responses were relatively brief these have been transcribed verbatim. In most cases, responses have been synthesized so as to give a more global view of any RCR levels, although particular attention is given to those parts of their responses that are significant for RCR.

Some respondents already have been discussed at length in the preceding chapter.

6.2 Respondent “Alpha”

“Alpha” is a very senior WCG administrator and was involved in the WCG’s early stages of transformation. He provided terse answers to a number of paradoxical scenarios. In regard to the preliminary prompt questions, “Alpha” wrote:

(1) “God designed the creation in such a way that humanity evolved from lower forms.” This minimizes the complexity of the question. However, as both creation and evolution are taken into account, “Alpha” is showing signs of RCR Level 1.

(2) “The fires resulting from lack of preventative burning destroyed far more flora and fauna, and spoiled far more scenery, than preventative burning would have.” This leans towards accepting one option over another, and would be at RCR Level 2, as “Alpha” provides an excellent reason.

(3) “God is who God is, regardless of our capacity to understand God. We can only accept or reject his revelation of himself.” This is a little impatient with complexity, and probably pegs the response at RCR Level 1.

These probes reveal an RCR Level 1-2. As “Alpha” also is at the apex of WCG decision-making, a full account of his responses concerning the Trinity is presented below.

In response to the question, “*What is your understanding of the Trinity?*”, “Alpha” wrote:

God is one Being and three, coessential hypostases, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are distinct but not separate.

This is very close to the WCG *Statement of Beliefs* (WCG, 2001). It will be taken as “Alpha’s” thinking as he probably contributed to the formulation of that statement. It could have been elaborated, to reveal more clearly “Alpha’s” own understanding, not just acceptance of the statement. Another respondent’s statement was similar so the RCR level (superficially Level 3) is the same.

In response to the question, “*What led your thinking towards accepting the Trinity?*”, “Alpha” wrote:

My study of the development of the doctrine in the history of the Christian faith.

The WCG in the past encouraged the acceptance of selected Biblical and secular “proof texts” in the place of argumentation. If the new material has been read in the same way (albeit in a different direction, and with greater approval) the same restricted thought codes could be operative. Whatever can be implied from the above response, it cannot go beyond RCR Level 1.

In response to the question, “*Did you understand the Trinity before believing in it? Or did you understand the Trinity after believing in it?*”, “Alpha” wrote:

I understood the tenets of the doctrine before I believed it.

No explanation of this is offered. From the discussion earlier in this thesis, cogent reasons for the pre-acceptance (before understanding) option were advanced by theologians. “Alpha” implies that his cognitive efforts contributed to his understanding of the Trinity, or it may be possible that his acceptance of what he read (that supported the Trinity) resulted in his accepting the Trinity. By “tenets” “Alpha” might mean the basic elements (that is, that each of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are divine) but this would not have differed from the WCG’s pre-Trinitarian understanding. If the “tenets” went beyond this, it would have been helpful to know something about the process of development. “Alpha’s” response is limited to RCR Level 1.

In response to the question, “*What kind of thinking followed your acceptance of the Trinity?*”, “Alpha” wrote:

The question is not clear to me.

Why the question is not clear is not explained. “Alpha” is not expressing his thinking at any RCR Level at this point, but his response is appropriate if, for him, the

question did not appear to invite elaboration on the possible connections between reasoning and belief.

In response to the question, *“How did your acceptance of the Trinity influence your thinking about other doctrines and practices of the WCG?”*, “Alpha” wrote:

Because the doctrine of the Trinity was held up as a criterion for the identity of the WCG as the only true church, it placed all doctrines under scrutiny.

It is likely that the old WCG defined itself as the true church because of the positive revelation (of the God Family) it received, rather than in terms of the negative (rejection of the Trinity). The logic of “Alpha’s” response follows this line - because of (only) this ... then (only) that. Such either/or thinking can only be RCR Level 1.

In response to the question, *“Did the WCG’s acceptance of the Trinity lead to changes in other WCG beliefs? In what way do you think this happened?”*, “Alpha” wrote:

It caused the church to abandon its claim to be the only true church. This understanding led to review of the Sabbath doctrine.

It is not clear how accepting the Trinity would lead to the abandonment of the Only True Church assumption. Following Armstrongism’s way of rationalizing beliefs, the new belief could have been explained as a sign that God was revealing new truth, which the other (false, according to Armstrongism) churches had long counterfeited. In fact, Seventh Day Adventism had in its early days accepted Trinitarianism and this did not prevent it from holding to an exclusive identity. Neither have the Seventh Day Adventists abandoned their Sabbath-keeping since becoming more ecumenical. “Alpha’s” assertion needs much more justification. It cannot go beyond RCR Level 1.

In response to the question, *“Is there anything about the Trinity that isn’t understood by you, or in your view isn’t understandable?”*, “Alpha” wrote:

Little about the Trinity is understandable. It is rooted in faith that the Bible reveals God for who he is, not in formal logic.

Without trying to dispute this claim (numerous well-received treatises are available on the Trinity that go into the subject deeply, transparently and convincingly; such as Grenz, 2004; Letham, 2004), “Alpha’s” statement projects his conclusion as a generalization. It might have been re-expressed as “There is little about the Trinity that I understand.” But “Alpha” must know *something* substantial about it, as one of the chief WCG promoters of the doctrine. The second half of the response also needs to be broadened – Biblical revelation of God also can be conceptualized as subjective encounter, rather than (only) by an objectified catechism. Likewise, the logical characteristics of ordinary human thought would participate in the sentient encounter of humanity with God. Regrettably, “Alpha” restricts his contribution to this dialogue unnecessarily. It is evident from the limited responses given that “Alpha” is thinking at RCR Level 1, but he does recognize the distinction between faith and reason.

In response to the question, “*In your view, to what extent do you think other members of the WCG understand the Trinity? (refer to clergy and laity separately if you wish)*”, “Alpha” wrote:

Both the laity and the clergy run the full gamut of understanding, from little understanding to clear understanding.

This response takes into account a range of possibilities but does not explain why or suggest the implications of this. The response is at a superficial RCR Level 2.

In response to the question, “*In your view, why did so many ministers and members find it difficult to accept the WCG’s adoption of the Trinity?*”, “Alpha” wrote:

Because of the indoctrination against it.

Only one option is given therefore the response is at RCR Level 1. “Alpha” is silent on other options, such as the emotional and intellectual impact of the changes on

WCG ministers and members, the methods used by the WCG to introduce the doctrine, and also the scholastic input of Dr. Stavrinides.

In response to the question, *“In your view, to what extent can the transformation of the WCG be attributed to its understanding of the Trinity?”*, “Alpha” wrote:

The understanding of the Trinity was part of the transformation. I doubt the transformation can be attributed to accepting any one doctrine, including the Trinity.

Here several possibilities are offered, and RCR Level 2 is appropriate.

In response to the question, *“In your view, is the Trinity logical? How could the logic of the Trinity be explained?”*, “Alpha” wrote:

The logic of the Trinity can only be understood in the light of the logic of the Incarnation, or the logic of the grace of God. It cannot be explained by rational or formal logic.

The first sentence (A) is contrasted with the second (B). However, the first sentence has another option (C), therefore a higher RCR level is mooted. But this is undeveloped and “Alpha’s” thinking reverts to RCR Level 1.

In response to the question, *“Do you have any other comments on the role of the Trinity in the WCG’s transformation?”*, “Alpha” wrote:

Only when the Trinity is understood in the light of the Incarnation does it renovate the hearts of believers in terms of shedding their legalistic religious ideas for the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The God who created us is the God who judges us and the God who redeems us. In Christ we learn that God is for us, not against us, because there is no God other than the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has chosen in his freedom to take the human condition into himself and redeem it for our sakes.

This extended response is more helpful in considering “Alpha’s” thinking, although it hints at the influence of Torrance’s thinking (see Chapter 5). But the paragraph is a series of contrasts along the lines of “because of this ... then that”, or even “either this ... or that”. The eloquence masks the inherent binary thinking, but the statement is close enough to RCR Level 2.

Finally, “Alpha” commented, “It is not clear to me how these kinds of questions can produce clear conclusions about thinking in the final assessment.” Although the questions were intended to confront the respondent with a series of matters that could result in either polar thinking or more complicated outcomes, that might even involve transcendental considerations, but not to garner explicit or “correct” answers to problems, this may not have been made sufficiently clear.

The opportunity to attempt an explanation of the relations between Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as well as the significance for WCG ecclesiology or soteriology – was not taken up, unfortunately. There is an echo of reliance on Biblical authority for church teachings, rather than a developed hermeneutic. “Alpha’s” acceptance of the Trinity appears to rest on the authority of Scripture, and possibly the authority of the church, both of which undergird his own authority in the WCG, but this does not explain the validity of any change in interpretation.

There is hardly any development of answers, which reveals a reliance on authoritative, rather than probabilistic, knowledge. It is as though the questions should have resulted in definitive answers rather than revealing “Alpha’s” personal struggle to articulate paradoxical beliefs. He would have been comfortable in a black and white kind of thinking but – ironically – he has elsewhere argued convincingly for liberalisation. There is little evidence of RCR levels above 1, apart from some at a superficial Level 2.

6.3 Respondent “Bravo”

This retired senior WCG minister, gave an extended overview of the complementary nature of science and theology. The Trinity was explained using logic and Scripture. He presented an analogy about fire – as it has the inseparable

characteristics of flame, light, and heat. But “Bravo’s” response to the preliminary question on Creation versus Evolution was also a lengthy exposition on parts of the book of Genesis. In summary, “Bravo” was relying on Scriptural authority to present his case, and that presentation was a de facto reasoned argument based on Scriptural authority. In “Bravo’s” case, statements are related to updated scientific terminology but the underlying reasoning is fundamentalist. For example:

Humans are in the image and likeness of God in some ways: humans think, plan, abstract, imagine, visualize, conceive thoughts and love. These activities are spiritual. Humans’ body and appearance is in matter, but humans’ mind and thought are in spirit. God existed before there was substance of any kind. He created everything that exists. God is Spirit and not “composed” of anything.

“Bravo” can take into account various positions, but ultimately reduces the argument to a central cause, so his explanation is at RCR Level 1.

“Bravo” was persuaded by the arguments for the Trinity and offers quotes and testimony regarding the effect this has had on his worldview, but does not engage with the matter in any depth. It is as though the effects explain the causes. In regard to the incarnational basis for the Trinity, “Bravo” states that Jesus was “fully God and fully human at the same time,” but is unsure about the spatial aspects of this. Whilst the Logos “became a human being and dwelt on earth This does not mean, of course, that he ceased to be in heaven. God is not separated.” “Bravo’s” way of thinking about God is reliant upon a literalistic view of scripture.

From his questionnaire answers that relied heavily on Biblical support, it could be predicted that “Bravo’s” responses to the questionnaire would show a relatively low level of RCR. In fact, his responses showed that he was dependent on Armstrong’s interpretations before (and he gives lengthy quotes) and now is “thrilled and enthralled” by the WCG’s new teachings. Again, Bible passages are quoted to support the new view. Overall, there is little development of reasoning as would be expected in RCR. Finally, “Bravo” stated that after accepting the new doctrine of the Trinity:

I began immediately to question other doctrines and practices of the WCG and found that most would have to be changed because the Bible did not say what we had been taught it said Our old teaching was affected greatly by the dynamism of Mr. Armstrong ... It had been “drummed” into our heads over and over that the Trinity was wrong.

Here we note again that reasoning is tied to an authoritative source, but now it is implied that the source (the Bible) is transparent whereas in the past “Bravo” relied on Armstrong’s interpretation of it. It is possible that “Bravo” now relies on Tkach’s interpretation. Whatever the case, the level of reasoning is limited by his reliance on external authority, and appears to be at RCR Level 1.

6.4 Respondent “Charlie”

“Charlie” is a senior WCG administrator. In his response to the preliminary question on science, he rejects the either/or thinking of Greek dualism, and suggests that Hebrew thought allows for complementarity. The answer to the bushfire question allowed for context-based solutions (“this to my mind has to be taken in the context of a period of time and not judged in the short term”) indicative of RCR Level 2. Regarding the Trinity, “Charlie” refers to space/time dimensions and comments that “we see this One God in three aspects of being, perhaps rather like white light through a prism splits into all the rainbow colours.” Furthermore:

For example, quantum mechanics seems very strange and quite separate from the way Newtonian physics reacts, yet both are valid in their respective forms. I think we need to look at this question in terms that are not “religious” but realistic, appreciating that there are many dimensions ...

“Charlie” appears to think at a high RCR level and is able to see that (from his perspective) “the WCG’s (new) position is still unlike the traditional view of the Trinity, ” but he does not explain how or why. His own view changed following the WCG’s provision of new information on the subject. Furthermore, “this new direction and correction of error came from the top of the Church down, and not from some grass roots rebellion. So many in the WCG – myself included – still, look to the Church for

guidance ...”, and he refers to the influence of “our previous leader under Christ Herbert W. Armstrong.”

Perhaps the initial sign of RCR has to be moderated by the expression of dependency on the WCG for guidance in thinking. It may be that the change in doctrine actually confirmed a pre-existing identity (even if it led to the rejection of some beliefs), for “Charlie” refers to Armstrong’s oft-quoted dictum that “if we are wrong we will change, no matter how hard.” The fact of changing error is equated with validation of the previous identity, even though that involved error. Regarding identity, “Charlie” says:

Some outside our fellowship said we were not Christian until we accepted and embraced the Trinity. This is strongly refuted, if only in the light of the lives of many faithful members before the Church changed in this one area.

The above reveals a strong commitment to the authenticity of the WCG, whether or not it taught correct doctrine. It is close to a mindset that is often noted in anti-cult literature (Galanter, 1989; Markham, 1987). Thus the identity of being Christian in terms of the initial calling into the Armstrong religion is sustained, and would continue even if the WCG were to again modify its beliefs. This raises an issue noticeable in several respondents. To what extent is the initial conversion to Armstrongism still the controlling factor in their lives, and to what extent is the conversion to mainstream Christianity at best a secondary layer of conversion?

“Charlie” recognizes the difficulties posed by polarization and looks for a middle path between positions. He accepts the need for multi-dimensionality. He expresses “great relief that our previous opinion was wrong” (implying that he was glad to be free of the burden of earlier erroneous WCG teaching) but admits that “this was only possible when new information was given by the WCG not previously addressed before.” This, of course, reveals the dependence of some WCG ministers on the WCG as the only legitimate source of religious knowledge and agenda-setter for questions. It also ties ways of thinking to specific content. The determination of RCR levels is admittedly an approximation, given the limited evidence presented. Further probing, in

a personal interview, might reveal traces of a higher level, but Reich's tentative Level 2 is indicated here.

6.5 Respondent "Delta"

"Delta", now retired from active pastoral duties, continues in a senior editorial capacity. He is somewhat remote from the centre of power in Pasadena. Excerpts from his responses to the questionnaire give background to the WCG changes, from his perspectives.

"Delta's" responses to the preliminary questions indicated a kind of reasoning that was probabilistic and went beyond either/or, showing that he has respect for the need for evidence and sound reasoning before accepting logical arguments as being conclusive. In regard to the Creation-Evolution dispute, he writes that "problems arise when one tries to prove one or the other is wrongI see no conflict if one admits to the limitations of both 'sides' of this argument." Regarding the environment, he refers to how people "place an artificial value on it." These remarks about the first two probes seem to be at RCR Level 2, at least superficially, in that more than one possibility is admitted.

"Delta's" responses on the topic of the Trinity will be discussed more extensively. In regard to the prompt on God being both One and Three, "Delta" wrote:

By any normal application of logic, they can't. But the nature of God is beyond our understanding. At best, we can make a stab at explaining some aspect of it, but this is usually at the expense of another aspect The doctrine of the Trinity is important in refuting certain heresy, but it is at the expense of a comfortable anthropomorphic concept of a Father and Son with whom one can develop a relationship It is a bit like the number pi. It is a comfortable fraction, but an ever elusive decimal. For most purposes, the "fraction" works well. But for technical discussion you must deal with a recurring decimal. If you try to reconcile them, you will go mad.

In RCR terms, this takes into account the context and hence allows for several understandings of the concept, which are not in conflict but nevertheless alter the perspective. “Delta” acknowledges the importance of context, as an explanation of one aspect “is usually at the expense of another aspect.” In these responses, he demonstrates the capacity to move beyond either-or thinking and moves towards constructing overarching theories to allow for differences of opinion, for the “other aspects” continue to be under consideration.

“Delta” could easily be placed on the higher levels of RCR, given his recognition of context dependency and awareness of higher order explanations. He is able to distinguish between a reified concept (“the idea of the Trinity”) and concrete expressions of the Godhead. “Delta” acknowledges that “Some aspects of particle physics have made the Trinity a bit less ‘weird’.” Regarding the “logic” of the Trinity, “Delta” writes that:

efforts to make it “logical” end up distorting it. It is not a scientifically viable explanation and never can be. It is useful “scaffolding” that helps support some elusive concepts. But God’s nature is past finding out, and to reduce the discussion to logic is futile.

This is at least an RCR Level 3 argument because several possibilities are brought together provisionally, the connection serving to hold ideas in relationship without distorting any of them. When there is a return to each concept, they may be better understood on their own.

“Delta’s” understanding of the Trinity allows for a logical position where “God exists as ‘persons’ as well as an entity.” That is, “Delta” is prepared to wrestle with the paradox of singularity-plurality. He admits that “Our old position was too glib. It had aspects of truth, but at the expense of other, more important avenues of understanding.” This suggests that “Delta” is cautious about being glib also about the new doctrine, and he makes no claim to complete understanding of it. “Delta” is not convinced by the argument for the Trinity *per se*, but recognizes the utility of the idea as “a chain link fence that prevents me from straying too far into dangerous territory.” “Delta” wrote “In my view, the idea is not ‘understandable’. It is acceptable.” No further explanation

for this is given but it can be surmised from this response that the word “acceptable” implies a tentative position, based on recognition of difficulties with the traditional explanation and justification of the doctrine, and uncertainty about its application to the contemporary understanding of God or the WCG members’ relationship to God.

“Delta” reveals that the Trinity doctrine did not necessarily emerge out of a re-thinking of the relational logic of the Godhead as much as the “logic” of compliance with the dictates of those in power. For those who complied, the benefits of continued employment, and acceptance within mainstream Christianity, seem to have outweighed the discomfort of having to change. A change of thinking seems to have been tied to self and corporate identity, rather than to internal cognitive restructuring. This point may well indicate an ability to accept a new concept in “global” terms, but without engagement with the implications of that change for a new way of thinking theologically. It opens up the possibility that there was very little difference in the way of thinking between those who accepted and those who rejected the new belief, except in terms of flexibility and compliance. Of other WCG clergy, he says that “Most seem resigned to the position that it is not understandable ... Now the heats off {sic} I suspect that most don’t think about it much ... It is, to a large extent a non-issue now.”

“Delta” provides valuable reflections on the way the WCG introduced the changes. He is aware that beliefs imposed from above do not necessarily lead to mental assimilation or cognitive restructuring. As candid admissions, their quotation at length is justified.

I had long realized that the church needed to take a good hard look at its doctrines and especially practices. To be honest, the way the leadership initially introduced the Trinity reinforced my understanding that we needed to upgrade our approach to pastoral ministry.

.....

I suspect that the relatively small core of leadership who spearheaded the reforms had a “if we were wrong about that what else were we wrong about?” mind set. This, added to the “new broom sweeps clean” syndrome tended to put everything up for grabs. In retrospect, a more cautious approach would have been better.

.....

Because we are an authoritarian church, with hierarchical governance and no developed channels of opposition, there was a tendency to make transcendent changes by decree. This changes practice, but not necessarily belief. It will take years before all the church believes as opposed to accepts the changes. That does not mean the majority are secretly rejecting them.

.....

It is a bit like when a country goes over to decimal currency. Most people use both systems for a while, while some believe the money has value but still think in terms of the old.

.....

... when [the Trinity] was introduced it was “force fed” in a marathon series of lectures. This probably did more harm than good. We assumed the concept would be accepted by force of logic, and I suspect underestimated the emotional resistance. It is hard to be dispassionate when you feel as if you are betraying the “faith once delivered.” Many just could not handle the mental gymnastics and took the quick way out – they left.

.....

What has allowed us to make such a rapid transformation in so short a time is the fact that we retained after HWA’s death hierarchical and authoritarian governance. This allowed changes to be made by decree, from the top down. If we had been more congregational I don’t think we could have made the changes, or at least it would have taken decades.

These quotes from “Delta” about the autocratic imposition of the Trinity belief cast doubt on the cognitive comprehension of this doctrine by some of the WCG clergy, and its appropriate integration into the WCG’s theological edifice. It seems that the idea remains “illogical” to most, and the logic of its role in a larger theological framework appears to be absent. It was, after all, just one of many changes. When asked about the extent to which the transformation of the WCG could be attributed to its understanding of the Trinity, “Delta” wrote “In my considered opinion, not much.” He went on:

I think outside observers tend to overestimate the importance of the Trinity to the rank and file WCG thinkingAccepting a Trinitarian position did not

answer any questions that most members had ever had. Once the initial uproar had died down nearly everyone stopped talking about it.

“Delta” reveals that it had never been an intellectual issue, just emotional, in having to cope with the radical change. Therefore, “Since ‘authority’ and ‘church government’ was such an important issue, to resist was ‘rebellion’ and most members (correctly) did not want to do that. It set up cognitive dissonance.” Finally, “Delta” offers this view:

... to assume that this acceptance made a major change in the average person’s belief is, I think, to misinterpret what has happened. Once it became Trinitarian the WCG was accepted within the pale of acceptable Christianity. This has altered the way the church sees itself, and is perceived by others. This had been a positive change. But it has been at a terrible cost in attrition ... But it is water under the bridge now.

In summary, “Delta’s” RCR Level is probably 4, due to his attempt to hold together various ideas and possibilities, that vary in significance depending on the context. There are signs of a suitable overarching theory (for RCR Level 5). “Delta’s” views on the WCG transformation are astute and, in light of the authoritarian ethos of his employment, quite courageous.

6.6 Respondent “Echo”

This respondent holds a position in the WCG similar to a Bishop. He admits that because the WCG “had a faulty understanding of who God is, all other doctrines were skewed if not entirely flawed.” His responses to the preliminary questions reveal open-mindedness to complexity and an attempt to reconcile the Bible and the “book of nature.” “Echo” refers to “God as Creator of both the ‘book of nature’ which science seeks to describe and the book of revealed knowledge we call the Bible.” He writes:

Attempts to harmonize these books often fail because of our inadequacies in understanding both. But neither may be fully understood apart from attributing both to God.

This is a satisfactory description in terms of RCR, probably at Level 4, as “Echo” consciously connects A and B (and C ...). Both a scientific and a religious explanation are acceptable, in their own ways, as long as an overarching explanation is admitted.

In regard to the Trinity, the same kind of reasoning is evident. “Echo” refers to the example of light being both particle and wave:

We understand from the book of nature how something can exist in multiple dimensions – it comes as no surprise, then, that God who creates complexity in nature is in his nature also multi-dimensional.

This led to an appreciation of the classical definitions of the Godhead. He says that “Early understandings led to initial belief which opened my mind and heart to deeper understanding. Belief and understanding stand together and interact.” This profoundly impacted on his faith and ministry. However, his responses show more of an appreciation of the effects of this new truth rather than an ability to explain it or to penetrate its logical relationships.

“Echo” writes “I saw in the book of nature how such multi-dimensionality is an aspect of God’s good creation. This helped me to appreciate the complexities and subtleties that may then, appropriately, be attributed to God.” From this foundation, “Echo” “then came to appreciate the historic arguments from the early church fathers concerning the formulation of the classic definitions of the trinity {sic}.” The RCR level is also expressed this way: “Belief and understanding stand together and interact.”

Further evidence of “Echo’s” grasp of the foundation of Trinitarian theology is stated as “Indeed, the incarnation and the trinity {sic} are inseparable truths.” This is extended to the role of the “third member” – the incarnational aspect of the Trinity “also had a big impact on my ecclesiology with respect to a fuller appreciation of the role of the Spirit and how he forms and gifts the church.” “Echo’s” response shows theological astuteness and comprehension of the inter-relationships inherent in the doctrine and its implications. His reasoning tends towards at least RCR Level 4.

6.7 Respondent “Foxtrot”

“Foxtrot”, a long-time WCG writer, in response to the first prompt, on creation/evolution, asserted that we have minimal knowledge of the science of life-origins (“I don’t discount the theory {of evolution}, necessarily, but this doesn’t mean it is actually true”,) and are left with “philosophical conundrums” about humankind’s origins. “In the final analysis, the answer to your question doesn’t matter to me. My faith is based on what God has done through Christ and in the Holy Spirit.”

In regard to the fire prevention prompt, “Foxtrot” referred it to a “quandary” that most people must “weigh” as there is “no clear cut answer” and “knowledgeable people will sincerely disagree.” This allows for RCR Level 2.

The preliminary question about the Trinity prompted “Foxtrot” to write, “Let me turn the question around. Who says and on what basis that God cannot be Trinitarian?” His argument goes like this:

- (1) “As Christians, we accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and the New Testament writings as those that bear witness to him.”
- (2) “Based on this, the reality has to be that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God.”
- (3) “Since we also know from Scripture that there is but one God, the conclusion is that he is Triune, one God in three ‘Persons’.
- (4) “‘How’ this can be is something we cannot know and Scripture does not attempt to explain.”
- (5) “There is really no “how” to it. God is Triune simply because that is what he is. No further defense or explanation is needed.”

This is an unusual argument, the connection between the premises and conclusions being based on conjecture. The response is probably RCR Level 2. Although based on the Bible as authority, it nonetheless recognizes both one God and three Gods. It tries to explain God as one and two – Christ as God – but doesn’t argue how the Holy Spirit is God. The basis in authority and conjecture would mean it does not qualify for a higher RCR level.

This probe into “Foxtrot’s” thinking reveals that, in RCR terms, he retains some aspects of either/or thinking (RCR Level 1). In answers to subsequent questions on the Trinity, “Foxtrot” argues for a unity that nevertheless is composed of three, without actually arguing the relationships between the three that characterize the unity. He attributes to the Scriptures the foundation for the assertion, and the Holy Spirit the source of the knowledge. Prior to the WCG’s change, “Foxtrot” admits “I really didn’t think about the issues surrounding God’s nature” and that he never considered the logical implications of his theology, which is surprising given “Foxtrot’s” prominent role as the WCG’s articulator of its beliefs.

In regard to the Holy Spirit, “Foxtrot” suggests that the WCG thought of it as a power external to God, something God used to accomplish his purposes, therefore (by implication) making God dependent on this source. In the past, this commodification of the Spirit was described as being God’s omnipresence and omnipotence but, more importantly, God’s life resident in the believer and the down-payment of eternal life within the family of God (Hoeh, 1958). It is not certain that the WCG had a consistent belief that the “power” of God was *only* a separate entity or quantum. In the case of the Mormon church, whilst the Holy Spirit shares in a “divine, impersonal influence, it also is (in the form of) a personage” (Norwood, 1997, p.10). That is, it is not certain that the WCG believed that the Holy Spirit was God (thus having God’s personal attributes) or only an impersonal power, of which God consisted.

“Foxtrot” admits that he was uninterested in the subject of the Trinity when it was first introduced by the WCG, but over time became aware of new ideas suggested by the WCG’s theological adviser, McKenna. “Foxtrot” says “I think I grew in understanding as the issues became more meaningful to me. If ‘being meaningful’ is somehow involved with believing, then the whole relationship of understanding and belief evolved mutually.” At this point, RCR Level 2 is indicated (both “belief” and “understanding” are taken into account). However, in explaining this, “Foxtrot” bypasses the necessary resolution of the “two natures of Christ” (Chalcedon). Assuming Christ to be God, “Foxtrot” directly accepts the Trinitarian formula. How the Holy Spirit is understood as “Person” also is absent from this explanation. It seems that the Trinitarian “package” is accepted as presented by orthodoxy, but without an attempt to reason through the steps followed when the doctrine was originally formulated.

“Foxtrot” was slow to see the connection of the Trinity with other doctrines, but now can write that “after years of believing the doctrine as information, I have arrived at, let us say, a higher plane,” and he sees that “the love of God in Christ for us is everything.” Thus from a global acceptance of the Trinity, albeit with a concentration on Christ, “Foxtrot” has reached a global understanding of God’s relation to other doctrines, but he seems to be referring to a Christocentric theology rather than a worked-through Trinitarian one. This seems to be typical of the WCG’s incorporation of the Trinity – as a singular doctrine rather than a theological catalyst (in this, the WCG is not alone, as several recent books on the Trinity have pointed out; see Grenz, 2004, Letham, 2004, Olson & Hall, 2002). It is also obvious that the Trinity doctrine is not understood as having been a catalyst for the initial WCG changes. However, a renewed appreciation of Jesus as God seems to have been instrumental in opening up further changes. “Foxtrot” says “It would seem to me that the testimony of Jesus came into our hearts and thus informed all our doctrinal beliefs, including that of the Trinity as doctrine.”

In an attempt to explain the “logic” of the Trinity, “Foxtrot” starts with “at its core, the Trinity explanation is quite simple, beautiful and logical,” but he relies on the Scriptures as the source of that concept and equates logic with the sense of the doctrine’s believability, if not aesthetics. This lies apart from formal logic – that is, the statement of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit being one is equated with logic itself. Thus acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity seems to stand or fall on the basis of the WCG member’s agreement with other changes. Members saw the doctrine “as a pawn in a theological battle” and “for most who stayed ... (it) was a blip on the screen that came and went.”

From the above responses it is apparent that, at the level just below the WCG upper echelon, the doctrine of the Trinity was one of several but not the most important changes that had to be dealt with in the existing WCG paradigm. It is possible that the doctrine has become a non-issue for most members. It certainly was not integrated well into the overall WCG transformation. In part, this was a missed opportunity, but the WCG did focus on the role of Christ in the Godhead more explicitly and this (in the WCG’s thinking) lent weight to the argument for a triune God. In regard to the RCR

level of “Foxtrot’s” thinking, it is evident that he has a higher way of thinking (than before) but the full potential of this is yet to be realized. The RCR Level remains at 2.

In his response to “What is your understanding of the Trinity?” “Foxtrot” relies on Biblical sources as the basis for his reasoning. Others might argue for Tritheism – or for modalistic monotheism – using the same premises, but these theological nuances are not addressed here. “Foxtrot” writes that “God’s Triune being may be a counterintuitive reality based on human notions of God” but what this means is not clear. To the extent that Scripture is presented as a powerful underlying motif for understanding of this topic, the writer is indebted to the WCG’s fundamentalist heritage. To “Foxtrot”, “the Trinity is perfectly understandable” but he hastens to add that “Scripture only tells us that this reality is so, not *how* it can be that God is such.”

Thus the externalities of the Trinitarian doctrine seem to be acceptable in “Foxtrot’s” current understanding of the Bible, but there is no attempt to explore the intra-Trinity relations or the ramifications for a more complex understanding of divinity. Although “Foxtrot’s” responses are more extensive than other respondents, they are nevertheless descriptive and not analytical. Various positions are described but their complex relationships are not explored. There are few statements in argument form that could be analysed in terms of RCR.

Commenting in the WCG change process, “Foxtrot” thinks that the Trinity doctrine was overshadowed by the other changes, particularly the Sabbath and Holy Days (Levitical Sabbaths observed with Christian overtones). The Trinity “did not cause the notoriety or scandal that the Sabbath issue caused.” “Foxtrot” concludes:

This, perhaps, reveals how deeply the WCG was misguided and where we put our strongest faith. Our church was more concerned about physically resting on a day of the week and a few days of the year than about knowing who God was, and the implications this should have for our joy, our faith and our salvation.

Ultimately, “Foxtrot” implies, there had to be a breakthrough to a truly theocentric worldview, applicable to contemporary society and life. The “cultic mindset,” focussed

on a powerful man and his mission, and rooted in pre-Christian themes, had to give way to a better perspective where a relational God was the centre of belief and practice.

“Foxtrot” thinks that a shift in worldview may have contributed to the beginning of change, and this was only possible after the WCG was able to emerge from under the shadow of Armstrongism:

To me the fundamental catalyst for change and that which caused a domino effect in changes was how one viewed the role of Herbert Armstrong and the role of the WCG in God’s purpose ... I believe the domino started with the toppling over of Herbert Armstrong ... Our tiny denomination, led by our specially-chosen apostle, was the apple of God’s eye, the first-fruits of God’s harvest ... no changes in doctrine were possible until Herbert Armstrong was deceased.

Armstrong had long taught that the “white” people of America and Britain were the true descendants of ancient Israel, to which biblical prophecies applied in these times. Observance of the seventh-day Sabbath was believed to be an identifying sign of this Israelite heritage. However, the expected prophecies (or the WCG’s interpretation of them) failed, and the prophet (Herbert Armstrong) died. The loosening of commitment to the eschatological framework probably had a destabilising effect on the commitment to Sabbaths, and other “Old Testament” practices. The very identity of the WCG was under scrutiny. This dimension of the pre-Trinitarian reforms should be considered in terms of Festinger’s (1956) theory of cognitive dissonance. Indeed, that term has been used often by the WCG to describe its experience of these changes. “Foxtrot” put it this way:

Our Anglo-Israelism defined our church in great part and was, in a sense, a major underpinning for our Sabbatarianism ... Was our repudiation of Armstrong’s Anglo-Israelism and speculative prophecy the catalyst that allowed us to question our entire theological system?

This view, although plausible, has not been put by other respondents to this survey. The observance of the seventh day has otherwise been promoted for universal reasons.

Overall, “Foxtrot” seems to operate consistently at RCR Level 2. The existence of alternatives is recognized and unusual connections are described but there is no engagement with the inter- or intra-relations of the constructs.

6.8 Respondent “Golf”

This respondent has varied theological experience and his responses were expected to reveal the type of reasoning probably offered to the WCG to assist the leadership in their understanding of Trinitarianism. “Golf” was an observer of these changes rather than an instigator. The need to grasp “real relations” between apparent alternatives is recognized by “Golf” but in the preliminary responses the “how” of this is not articulated. The complexity of the Being of God is stated esoterically, and most responses are short and personal.

In response to the introductory prompts, “Golf” wrote the following (in this and subsequent responses, “Golf’s” frequent use of capitalization is retained, to point to his emphases. Several sentences contain solecisms and these have been reprinted verbatim, after carefully checking, to illustrate “Golf’s” way of thinking):

- (1) “Science and its relationship to Theology requires the development of our thought in such a way that the real relations between them, rooted in the Incarnation of the Word of God, might be grasped and articulated. In this case, the old contradictions between evolution and creation will fade away and a new understanding will be achieved”{sic}.
- (2) “The problem of physical evil needs a new understanding when we will be able to grasp the real relations between theology and science. A theological science needs to be articulated whose wisdom might discern evil and the demonic in the spacetime{sic} universe of God.”
- (3) “The doctrine of the Trinity of the One God is a confession made in the Light of the Revelation of God. He is a Self-Revealing, Self-Naming, Self-Defining and Communication interaction with His People in His Creation the teaches us that

His Being as the Great-I-AM He is to be understood with His Word become flesh as the Father, Son, and Spirit of His eternity”{sic}.

From the responses to these probes, it is noted that “Golf” suspends immediate judgment: “real relations” between the entities are yet to be revealed; at that time, “old contradictions” will fade away. The answers are somewhat vague and metaphysical. Although this might align the responses with RCR level 2-3, there is no tangible argumentation that precedes it. That is, the higher level does not appear to be grounded and reasoning seems to be “from above.”

In response to the question, “*What is your understanding of the Trinity?*”, “Golf” wrote:

The Trinity of God is the Revelation of the Being and Nature of the Creator and Redeemer of the world. It is known in the Light of the Word become flesh in His Creation, in the Light of the Incarnation in the Creation {sic}.

If this is an argument that X is X, then it is tautological and at RCR Level 1. Perhaps inadvertently, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned as the “Third Person”. The Holy Spirit’s inclusion would have introduced another variable, resulting in a higher RCR level.

In response to the question, “*What led your thinking towards accepting the Trinity?*”, “Golf” wrote:

God Himself {sic}

This is too elliptical to be analysed in terms of RCR.

In response to the question, “*Did you understand the Trinity before believing in it? Or did you understand the Trinity after believing in it?*”, “Golf” wrote:

He gave me understanding of Himself {sic}.

This deeply personal statement is respected but it also resigns itself to only one possibility, thus placing it below RCR.

In response to the question, “*What kind of thinking followed your acceptance of the Trinity?*”, “Golf” wrote:

A new relational and kinetic thinking became a part of my becoming {sic}.

Granting the possibility that “Golf” is alluding to the kinetic depth effect (Reber, 1995, p.399-400), “a perceptual effect in which a visual pattern will appear to be flat (two- dimensional) when stationary but when moved give rise to an experience of depth (three-dimensional),” he has recognized an essential characteristic of RCR. If “Golf” is suggesting that the Trinitarian motif corresponds to the kinetic depth effect, so that (for example), his thinking about issues corresponds to each “Person” of the Trinity *depending on the context*, then “Golf” has given an answer at a good RCR level, perhaps 2-3.

In response to the question, “*How did your acceptance of the Trinity influence your thinking about other doctrines and practices of the WCG?*”, “Golf” wrote:

The Being of God in Himself and the Being of God in His Acts, though differentiated, may not be divorced. He is in His Eternity what He is in time and history. Everything that denied this wholeness had to be changed {sic}.

The logic implicit in this is that A is A and B is B; all that is A belongs to A, and all that is B belongs to B. Anything that is B that intrudes into A has to be transformed into A (and probably vice versa). The implication is that the Trinity became the benchmark for all other beliefs – they had to be brought into line with it (that is, to be orthodox) but this is not to say that they were brought into line with its interior logic. In any case, the response is enigmatic because “Golf” came to the WCG late, just as it was becoming Trinitarian. There is little information about “Golf’s” pre-WCG beliefs but they can be assumed to be Trinitarian, so he really wasn’t “transformed” along with the other WCG leaders. If an RCR level is to be assigned to the above response, as it

contrasts the nature of God *ad intra* and *ad extra*, locating God in time and eternity, connected through the wholeness of God, it would be at least RCR Level 3.

In response to the question, “*Did the WCG’s acceptance of the Trinity lead to changes in other WCG beliefs? In what way do you think this happened?*”, “Golf” wrote:

Under the compelling reality of the relational veracity of the Being and Nature of God Himself, the WCG has been changing, if ever so slowly or reluctantly. The conversion of a human mind takes time and eternity {sic}.

This implies that God’s action and the WCG’s response are connected, in that God’s Triune nature is revealed in such a way that the recipients became partakers of that nature. As God is eternal, that process of transformation takes eternity. That is, as God is time-less, humanity’s conversion is ongoing. This is theologically interesting, and assumes that this is what really happened in the WCG’s case, but for the purpose of analysing this response in terms of RCR, it is evident that the “situation specificity” is actually “time” and there might be a case for RCR Level 3.

In response to the question, “*Is there anything about the Trinity that isn’t understood by you, or in your view isn’t understandable?*”, “Golf” wrote:

The mystery of God in His triunity is ever with me, prying my {word missing - eyes? heart? mind?} open always, so that I do not confuse my knowledge of Him with Himself {sic}.

Here “Golf” finds solace in piety and suggests that any knowledge of God that is ultimately valuable is known on the God-plane. The response allows for two ways of knowing, both apparently part of experience although one is subject to transformation, being conformed to the divine kind. But the response does not go as far as affirming equality or mutual necessity of each. At best, this is a case of RCR Level 2.

In response to the question, “*In your view, to what extent do you think other members of the WCG understand the Trinity? (refer to clergy and laity separately if you wish)*”, “Golf” wrote:

We all have trouble understanding the practical aspects of the Revelation, mostly because of our reluctance to believe so that we may understand it {sic}.

In an earlier response, “Golf” referred to some “reluctance” in the WCG conversion. Here, again, it is noted that “Golf” implies “reluctance to believe.” That conforms with the views expressed by other respondents, below, but is “Golf” referring to WCG leaders? The statement is enigmatic and unamenable to RCR analysis.

In response to the question, “*In your view, why did so many ministers and members find it difficult to accept the WCG’s adoption of the Trinity?*”, “Golf” wrote:

The Trinity of God is not accepted as a decision of men, but as a confession compelled by God Himself made known in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. **WCG has a tendency to understand Christ as someone less than God** {sic} (emphasis added).

The comment above indicates a lingering subordinationist position in the WCG (for an explanation of subordinationism, related to gender relations, see Anglican Media Sydney, 2002). This helps explain the WCG’s apparent inability to account for its transition from an Arian foundation to a position where a full Chalcedonian Definition is necessary for an authentic Trinitarian position to be held. It raises the possibility that the theology of the WCG’s transition to Trinitarianism has not been fully thought through. “Golf’s” statement is oblique to the question and it is difficult to assign an RCR level.

In response to the question, “*In your view, to what extent can the transformation of the WCG be attributed to its understanding of the Trinity?*”, “Golf” wrote:

The Revelation of the Word of God as the Christ of the Bible is the Light by which the Church developed her doctrine of the Trinity. It is in this Light that is necessary for seeing God in this way {sic}.

This statement can be recast as follows:

The Church (is by this meant the apostolic church or the WCG?) developed the Trinity in the light of (the revealing of the Word of God as the Biblical) Christ.

The implication is that this Light is Christ.

The light (knowledge) of Christ is needed to see God as a Trinity.

This is a logical argument and is probably at RCR Level 4 because it develops relationships between church, Christ, Bible and the metaphor of light.

In response to the question, *“In your view, is the Trinity logical? How could the logic of the Trinity be explained?”*, “Golf” wrote:

The Logic of the Trinity of {is?} the Logic of the Grace and Truth of God that resides bodily in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ {sic}.

This is an Incarnational proposition, based on the Chalcedonian Definition. The internal relation (probably brought about by the atoning work of Christ) is implicitly one of freedom or liberty, thus expressed as grace. This comment is a reconstruction of what is assumed to be “Golf’s” underlying theological understanding, so his response above is understandable by those cognizant of “Golf’s” other writings, but obscure to others. In regard to assigning an RCR level, the response’s obscurity notwithstanding, RCR Level 2-3 might be appropriate.

In response to the question, *“Do you have any other comments on the role of the Trinity in the WCG’s transformation?”*, “Golf” wrote:

I pray we may learn to take seriously His Command of our lives {sic}.

Reading between the lines, this may be a pious hope for the full transformation of the WCG and its leaders, with whom “Golf” works closely. The statement needs no RCR interpretation. “Golf” concluded by writing:

With a Christological center the Lord of time bears to our times, time past, time present, time future, the relationship of God’s eternity to us. I hope the Christology of your study will take time seriously in the light of His Eternity, when more than metaphysics or physics is implicated with us {sic}.

Here there is a clear correlation of opposites – time/eternity, via Christ – probably RCR Level 4. Although many of “Golf’s” statements were somewhat sententious, the overall impression is that his thinking on the various topics is the result of an attempt to reconcile non-compatibles, but it is expressed in a way that was unamenable to detailed RCR analysis. It might be appropriate to assign a general RCR Level 3.

6.9 Respondent “Hotel”

In his responses to the preliminary questions, this senior WCG minister (equivalent to a Bishop) shows an appreciation of the different goals and styles involved in scientific and theological thinking and rejects the artificial conflict between them. His thinking moves beyond the detail of the questions, to an overarching view of the principles involved. Regarding creation/evolution, he wrote:

For me, a most helpful key to understanding how these two ideas might be harmonized has been coming to learn more about the various genres of literature found in the Bible. The fact that a good portion of the early chapters of Genesis are in poetic form allows one to view them differently than if they are viewed as a modern scientific textbook The truth that God is the creator is the key concern. Poetic or even mythic literature forms are simply communication vehicles with which to express that central truth.

In this, the respondent demonstrates clearly an RCR Level of 4-5, in that the terms of the apparently non-compatible possibilities are redefined and ultimately an overarching view is suggested. The respondent goes on to write:

If a wooden, literalistic approach to Genesis – virtually ignoring the subject of literary genre – and the anti-supernatural bias that can colour the thinking of some scientists – can be rejected, the artificial and unnecessary conflict between science and Christianity can be eliminated.

In the probe on bushfires, he also shows an appreciation for social and ecological responsibility, expressed as sustainable development, and points to a “larger question” that deals with both sides as “critically important values.” Furthermore, he is aware of the limitations of analogies based on physical phenomena. He also is prepared to accept that there will be solutions that transcend his present limited understanding. This respondent looks below the surface of various accounts, to discern “central truth” and the emergence of a worldview conducive to the harmonization of accounts of the world, seeing true religion as the basis for an “intellectual environment in which modern science could develop.”

Regarding the Trinity, the respondent refers to the limitations of human comprehension in regard to different levels of existence. He admitted the limited value of analogies and wrote:

What may seem to be sensible or reasonable can later prove to be very wrong..... I believe we must retain the humility to recognise that just because something doesn't seem “reasonable” to us from our current limited human perspective doesn't in any way mean it isn't true.

By contrasting fallible personal perspectives and observations in nature, with “a truth that I believe is indeed taught in scripture”, the respondent demonstrates an even-handed approach to options, and an open-minded receptivity to previously unperceived options characteristic of RCR Level 5.

His explanation of the Trinity shows an understanding of unity in diversity. This came about as follows:

One strong value the old WCG held was a deep respect for scripture. When I saw verses in the Bible in a new light, the blinders began to fall from my eyes, and I realised that the Trinitarian perspective was a far more adequate explanation of the scriptures than our previous understanding. The key for me was seeing the scriptures with new eyes, and the realization that the Trinity explanation provided a “better fit”.

The consequence of his acceptance of the Trinity was to open up relationships with God and with other Christians, which had been blocked by the old WCG teachings. Therefore “there was a major amount of ‘humble pie’ to be eaten in admitting that our rather smug self-assurance about what we thought we knew was in fact wrong.” Now he can say that “The Trinity seems to me to be the most reasonable way to integrate that which is revealed in the Bible about God. It harmonizes what the scriptures tell us, in a way that seems to me to be clear and logical.”

In regard to the Trinity, this respondent writes “There is a perfect relational unity between them.” He is prepared to consider complex levels and combinations of relationship and, if he had been aware of the details of the RCR table, it is likely that he would have composed his response in comparable terms. Even though still attached to Scriptural authority, he reveals a search for “adequate” rather than absolute answers.

How can RCR be related to the above? In the minister’s expanded answers, there is an appreciation of the need for more openness to new beliefs, but there is little in the way of explaining the inherent structure of such belief. Therefore the change in thinking is dispositional, if not doxastic (Reich, 1991, p.78), whereas an analytical approach was probably deferred to a future, longer essay. Signs of this can be seen in this minister’s response to the question on the logic of the Trinity doctrine:

It seems to me the attacks against the “logic” of the Trinity occur because we human beings are projecting our existence and some of its limitations on God, and are illogically drawing conclusions.

This gives an adequate reason for a situation, but it is a statement of a “fact” rather than analysis of how or why this might occur. This is a self-imposed limitation by this respondent, who admits that “I fervently believe in gravity, and try to ‘live’ by it, but don’t ask me for an explanation of any substance about how or why it works!”

A positive outcome of the WCG changes was to broaden this minister’s and the WCG’s worldview – expressed as “integrating with the wider body of Christ” – and this led “to a much more humble, open approach.” Rather than seeking dogmatic answers, this minister was content to say that “the Trinity provides us with as accurate a ‘construct’ we can derive from what is revealed in the Bible about the nature of God.” The ultimate outcome was a worldview transformation, which resulted from a change in the way of thinking. However, the connection between this and the specifics of the RCR scale is unclear.

This senior official writes: “Accepting the Trinity made me more closely scrutinize the entire doctrinal package of the WCG, and made me more open to the changes that were to come.” He suggests that the theological package of Herbert Armstrong could only be unscrambled through “a total doctrinal revision. Once the house of cards began to fall, then the whole structure crumbled.” He goes on to say:

The changes in fact brought down the entire edifice to which so many had made such a high commitment – in one sense, it was like losing {sic} one’s “worldview” It stripped us down to the absolute basics of belief, and caused us to rebuild an entire new edifice of understanding, and over time, practice.

As indicated in an earlier paragraph, implied in this is a clearer appreciation of the Scriptures as the basic authority for beliefs, the Bible teachings now becoming transparent and perhaps more authoritative, following the retirement of Armstrong’s influence. Herbert Armstrong often said, “Don’t believe me ... believe the Bible!” and now, ironically, in taking Armstrong at his word his teachings have been rejected by his erstwhile followers. Yet this is somewhat of a detour from the main concern of this analysis – it does not matter who or what is the source of authority in these matters but, rather, how the text (hence thinking about the text) might be liberated from the tyranny of either/or structures. As such, the traces of dependence on authority sit uncomfortably

with the fine reasoning displayed by this senior minister. However, he is evidently capable of RCR Level 4-5.

6.10 Respondent “India”

“India” has a prominent role in editorial work and has published a compilation of items relevant to the WCG’s transformation.

In regard to the preliminary questions, “India” reveals a pragmatic approach. Thus the creation-evolution controversy can be resolved by a “God-directed” solution. Whereas the old WCG was staunchly Creationist, the WCG has changed sufficiently to allow for “India” to assert (not just speculate) a “God-directed evolutionary development” including “humanoids.” He writes: “At some point the physiology/neurology of these creatures was sufficient for God’s spiritual purpose.” No evidence is presented and the statement is consistent with the dogmatism of the past even though a different opinion is expressed. The California fires issue can be explained by “the natural cycle of events.” For “India” , there has to be a rational, practical explanation for these phenomena.

In his Trinity answer, “India” uses an analogy about a flame – which can be simultaneously light and heat – to suggest that there can be more than one aspect of the same entity. Therefore, “Once we have the conceptual capability of two persons in one spirit being, there is no conceptual barrier to seeing a third, when we see the biblical evidence equating the Holy Spirit with God.” Probably referring to historical theology, “India” says that “The doctrine [of the Trinity] was not arrived at by philosophical means, but Christians came to this conclusion because of the biblical evidence.” This is supported by conservative Biblical scholars yet, in a way, this statement attempts to build a bridge between the WCG and orthodoxy as the WCG has always identified with Biblical authority.

Commenting on his experience of hearing about the Trinity changes, “India” wrote:

Part of the problem was the way in which the doctrine was changed, too. I was not a minister at the time, but I was a writer, so I was invited to attend the conference at which the doctrine was explained, but I was told to keep quiet. Dr Stavrinides set up a huge syllogistic chain, in which I doubted some of the preliminary points, and so could neither ask for clarification nor accept the conclusions as certain. Many people at the conference also seemed to have sticking points, but since they lacked the philosophical training to ask the right questions, the syllogistic chain continued, and it felt like a philosophical steam roller.

As with the other respondents, “India” earlier believed from “Biblical evidence” that the Trinity doctrine was false. Evidently the presupposition for that conclusion was that the Trinity doctrine was rooted in paganism and its presentation in the scriptures was clouded. Once that assumption was discarded, the Biblical evidence was more transparent. There certainly was a shift in the belief, but “India” says that “there was no dramatic shift” in his kind of thinking. If there was a change, it was attitudinal – his identity as a Christian had been in opposition to mainstream Christians. The Trinity was in part rejected because of its identification with mainstream Christianity. As “India’s” self-identity changed, so did his opposition to other Christians and to their doctrines.

However, “India” suggests that there was no direct connection between the WCG’s acceptance of the Trinity and its changes in other doctrines, except perhaps that as the Trinity doctrine was de-demonized, so other mainstream Christian doctrines became acceptable. There does not seem to have been a systematic integration of ideas. “India” suggests that each doctrinal change “had a separate effect on the WCG.” “India” writes: “If it doesn’t make sense, then we label it satanic.” That is probably the reason why many of the WCG’s personnel rejected this doctrinal change. The Trinity is a difficult belief and it was presented to the WCG by Dr Stavrinides in an abstract fashion, whereas the WCG ministers had very limited philosophical and theological training. For them, truth had to be plainly based on the Bible otherwise it was considered a Satanic deception. Inadvertently, this reveals an enigma in the WCG’s strategy to introduce doctrinal change. It used philosophy to justify belief in the Trinity, whereas the ministry was looking for Biblical support.

“India” reveals that ultimately for many WCG members it was their identity of difference that mattered most. They were “called” out of “fallen Christianity”:

Our culture was changing, so that our identity was less in being different than others, than in being more like Christ. I remember observing at one point that members’ objection to one doctrinal change (I forget which) was, “But all the Protestants teach that.” This was the first concern that they stated, and I take it to mean that it was the most important concern to them – the problem was not what the Bible taught, but what others taught. They were more interested in being different, in defining their identity vis-à-vis Protestants, than being biblical. The Trinity change was a symptom of this change, not its cause.

“India” sees no logical necessity why a change in the Trinity doctrine would lead to other changes. He says that “I don’t think our doctrinal explanations were that carefully tied together, as if in an elaborate systematic theology.” At the time of the WCG’s initial changes, “India” was in theological training at Azusa Pacific University, and contributed to the WCG’s changes on Old Testament laws. He says “at no time did I hear anyone connect that change to the Trinity change. They seemed totally unrelated.”

The above is an interesting account of the piecemeal changes in belief, and their apparent unrelatedness to an underlying rationale, particularly in reference to an idea of God, or other systematic theology. That observation relates to the general approach by the WCG’s leaders, and “India” evidently had little to do with most of those changes except to explain them. There is no compelling evidence that he thought in the higher RCR terms at that stage or afterwards. “India’s” response to these preliminary questions rest on the assumption of choices between right and wrong answers, where these are possible. In the absence of a clear cut answer, there is little or no pursuit of partial answers or tentative solutions that tolerate ambiguity or paradox. As such, this limits “India’s” RCR level and there probably is not much change in the development of his way thinking (in RCR terms) compared to the old WCG.

The responses to specific questions that followed the above probes are mostly descriptive and without sustained argument. There is sufficient indication, however, of

RCR Level 2 in the following quote, in response to the question “Is the Trinity logical?”:

I don't have enough training in logic to answer this one. I have already mentioned above a way that heat and light can be an inextricable part of one flame; even in physics there can be more than one aspect within a thing. But my main point is that spirit is not necessarily like matter, and the logic that we develop is not necessarily conclusive when we try to figure out God. After all, he is transcendent – our Creator. We have to take him the way he reveals himself, not limit him to what we can understand.

Referring again to the WCG “cultural change” of which the Trinity was a “symptom,” part of “India's” reasoning is that the Trinity was just one more artefact of mainstream Christianity that was reacted against just for the sake of maintaining the WCG distinctive identity. Once the rationale for separation from mainstream Christianity was weakened, hostility to the various obstacles also became unnecessary and it seems that the Trinity doctrine was reconsidered in the same way as were other doctrines - partly as a means of eliminating barriers between the new WCG and acceptance as a genuine Christian church. This reinforces the view that this doctrinal change involved more of an abandonment of opposition to the belief rather than a well-thought through adoption of it.

The real change of thinking, therefore, was not in terms of the WCG's capacity to reason in such a way as to comprehend the Trinity but more in terms of the WCG's openness to organizational change. In this view, the WCG acquired those doctrines that were acceptable to orthodoxy and, after embracing (for example) the Trinity, was under pressure to understand and explain it to the membership. It seems that, from various responses to this survey, it did not take long for those who remained in the WCG membership to assimilate the new doctrine without having to think further about it.

From “India's” account, it is possible to surmise yet another paradox. Having found Biblical support for the Trinity doctrine (even though Stavrinides employed philosophical arguments in relation to what he termed a theological approach to understanding the Bible), the WCG leaders and members must have been reinforced in

the WCG's self-identity as based on a Bible-based theological system which continued to thrive in an authoritarian context. After all, there could be an appeal to a Biblical mandate for imposing the new doctrine. By dispensing with philosophical reasons for doctrinal change (after grounding much of the explanation to the ministry in those terms) and superstitious reasons for opposing it, the WCG members could be persuaded that the change was of God.

It appears that "India" consistently operates at RCR Level 2, in that he admits the role of several factors in a situation, even though there is no real engagement with the difficulties inherent in the components of a construct. As such, "India's" thinking is along conventional lines in the materials examined for the present thesis. He has a high view of Scripture and takes seriously his responsibility to articulate clearly and unambiguously the new WCG teachings in language the general membership will understand.

6.11 Respondent "Julius"

One of the few remaining ministers who served under Herbert Armstrong, "Julius's" responses to the preliminary questions expresses reservations about reconciling the evolutionary and special creation accounts of human origins, and relies on Biblical support for his beliefs. Regarding Creation versus Evolution, "Julius" states "I don't believe they can agree." He writes "I cannot reconcile the physical complexity of humans with a gradual development model." Responses to the other preliminary questions were also short – regarding the Trinity, "Julius's" "view is to accept the biblical record ..." without attempting to offer an explanation. He admits "I still cannot say I 'understand' the Trinity." He says "I gave twelve sermons on the subject and I don't think it was worth the effort!" These admissions show some self-knowledge and insight but place "Julius" at RCR Level 1.

"Julius's" other comments are short and cautious, and reveal little in the way of RCR thinking. This suggests that "Julius's" thinking may have been moulded to the new WCG position, rather than transformed by it. By maintaining the Trinity's "mystery" "Julius" is able to avoid wrestling with the complexity and implications of the topic. However, he admits that the acceptance of the Trinity doctrine "opened my

mind to the reality that we needed to re-evaluate other doctrinal positions and I felt vulnerable to the possibility that we may be wrong in other areas.” He attributes WCG doctrinal errors “to both poor theology and a poor and biased reading of history.” “Julius’s” thinking probably is at the same level as in pre-transformation days even though he has accepted the new beliefs. However, in limited examples, “Julius” shows that he is open to high RCR Level 1, for instance “I now believe there is a biblically balanced ‘middle of the road’ unity of Word and Spirit which I seek to embrace.”

6.12 Respondent “Kilo”

“Kilo” has retired from a senior WCG administrative post. In his response to the preliminary question on the origins of life, he stated that:

God is not limited by methods of protocol. He could have created the earth, animals and humankind immediately (big bang type theory) or in stages. Likewise, he could use evolution to continue the process. In no way does a theory of evolution limit or nullify God’s great work.

This indicates RCR Level 2, as both options are acceptable even though more weight is given to divine governance.

“Kilo” also seems to retain elements of the WCG’s former belief in the Godhead. It is clear that he has not fully assimilated the new doctrine. His brief explanation of the Trinity reveals elements of the older understanding and poses difficulties in respect of the new. Regarding the Trinity, he says:

I feel the best explanation builds on the early Christian teaching that God is equated with substance. The Father, of his own substance (his personal matter), generated Christ. Then, of their one substance they brought forth the Holy Spirit. From this we can say that God (the one substance called God) is now in the form of three persons. One substance, one God, in three persons.

Furthermore:

The word trinity is nothing more than a word that describes one God in the form of three persons. I visualize God generating Jesus as the one to provide salvation and the Holy Spirit as the one to draw humans to Jesus.

These statements on the Trinity, revealing “Kilo’s” understanding of God as “substance”, indicate an RCR Level 1.

Responses to other questions were brief and fairly simple. It appears that “Kilo” assented to the Trinity doctrine within the general drift of WCG changes, but he has not engaged critically with the doctrine. The responses that followed were insubstantial. Therefore it must be assumed that “Kilo’s” understanding of the WCG’s new doctrine is undeveloped, and he is likely to think of it in terms of the older explanation, using a relatively low level of RCR. For example, in response to the question “*How did your acceptance of the Trinity influence your thinking about other doctrines and practices of the WCG?*”, “Kilo” wrote:

I felt we needed to open our senses to God and let him reveal himself to us. We had been very closed minded, unwilling to consider his nature, unwilling to look at doctrines that were “difficult”. If looking at him gave us a better understanding, we needed to look at his scriptures to gain an understanding of them.

This statement shows openness to new explanations, that there may be other options, but this just at a high RCR Level 1. Finally, “Kilo” admits that:

When the doctrine of the God family fell, it loosened supports that upheld other doctrines. It began the “domino effect”. Each doctrine that fell caused something else to topple. It also showed that if we could be wrong on this important aspect of God, we could be wrong on others.

From the above it is appropriate to conclude that this minister settled on the dominant position based on the conviction that the WCG leaders were competent to present theology faithful to biblical criteria. A significant number of other WCG ministers, and lay members, may have accepted the Trinity (and other changes) only on

the basis of some authority – the Bible – which, because of its sacred status, legitimized the authoritarian imposition of teaching presumably contained within it. He has an overall RCR Level 1.

6.13 Respondent “Lima”

“Lima’s” response was perused carefully, on account of his prominent position in the WCG hierarchy. His early education and formative thinking was cultivated in the WCG, but he had opportunity to experience secular employment and study, and has been exposed to mainstream evangelical theology.

“Lima’s” reply to the test scenarios shows a degree of caution but also openness to other possibilities. His response to the first probe (*Science has discovered that mankind has evolved from lower forms, whereas the Bible gives an account of a special creation. How can these different versions agree?*), was:

I disagree with the assertion that “Science has discovered that mankind has evolved from lower forms.” I do not doubt that God could have accomplished the creation of humans through evolution; however, such an assertion is far from being proven.

This cautious approach is repeated throughout the responses to other questions. The second probe (*Fires caused devastation and loss of life in California in recent months. Preventative burning may have destroyed rare flora and fauna, and spoiled the scenery. What can you say about this?*) elicited this response:

I live in the area of the recent California fires. I have never seen a listing of rare species that would be destroyed by preventive burning, nor have I ever heard of such an argument being raised. I rather suspect that this is a false scenario.

“Lima’s” response to the third prompt (*Christian theology teaches the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. In your view, how can One God be Three?*), was:

God is unique. Science has and continues to discover many amazing features of the creation, but not yet completely understood all the mysteries of the created world including all the marvels of the human body. It is silly to conclude that we can fully comprehend the total nature of God. He is infinite and we are not.

This recognizes the ineffability of God and the futility of attempting to pursue this question through intellectual means alone. “Lima” appears to prefer decisive answers to problems, after determining their certainty, rather than tentative and partial ones, and shows traces of pre-complementarity thinking even though the above responses are highly intelligent in that, in each case, “Lima” critically examines the supposedly conflicting statements and presents reasons for rejecting one. “Lima’s” approach to resolving conflict apparently is to strategically dismiss undesired options, thus engaging in RCR only if absolutely necessary.

The purpose of these prompts was to ascertain if the respondents were candidates for consideration on the RCR “table” and the above responses show that “Lima” is reserved about committing himself to a definite stand on these issues. However, more than one position is envisaged in the response to the first prompt, the issues in the second prompt are not elaborated, and the third prompt defers intellectual engagement with the mystery of God. At this point, “Lima” could be placed at RCR Level 1-2.

In response to the question, “*What is your understanding of the Trinity?*”, “Lima” wrote:

God is one being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of the same essence, yet distinct.

This is really an attempt to define God, not to explain or try to demonstrate understanding of the Trinity. In “Lima’s” definition, God consists of three distinct ways God is God. The understanding that is needed to comprehend this is not demonstrated as the statement of definition is taken to be sufficient. A superficial RCR Level 2 could be assigned, only because God cannot be defined without recourse to a Trinity.

In response to the question, “*What led your thinking towards accepting the Trinity?*”, “Lima” wrote:

Previously, I tried to reconcile the unique nature of God by unwittingly embracing polytheism. I reasoned that God was one family and that Father and Son could tap into a never-ending source of power called Holy Spirit. This was not possible to reconcile with simple Scriptural references that God is one. It doesn’t even reconcile with the first of the ten commandments. The more I studied, the more I realized that God’s uniqueness is more logically and biblically expressed in the Trinity doctrine.

“Lima” suggests that change was the result of further study and the realization that there were logical reasons for accepting the new belief. Although not required by the question, information about books on the Trinity that were influential on “Lima’s” understanding of the doctrine, or an explanation of how logic might function in the doctrine’s plausibility, would have been useful. The reference to polytheism is interesting as the old WCG doctrine was ostensibly monotheistic, within a pluralistic formulation, and was quite distinct from Mormon polytheism. In “Lima’s” response, there is a clear contrast between monotheism and polytheism, and the thinking is at RCR Level 2.

In response to the question, “*Did you understand the Trinity before believing in it? Or did you understand the Trinity after believing in it?*”, “Lima” wrote:

I came to believe the doctrine after understanding its teaching. I believed in the existence of God before I came to understand very much about his nature of being. I do not believe it is possible for us to completely comprehend God, but the doctrine of the Trinity keeps us thinking in the correct manner.

The answers given are unequivocal, yet they appreciate the mystery and unattainableness of perfect knowledge. It would seem that “Lima” progressively yet cautiously moved to such a position. An increase in understanding of the Trinity seems to have resulted from an increasing openness to the doctrine, but how he was persuaded is not clear. The above quote reveals a “faith” based theology where reason is only

admitted to support the beliefs rather than question them. This is really a reliance on the supposed authority of “correct” teaching and does not say much about the reasoning that led to change in interpretation. This could lead to several options being considered, although all but the “correct” one would be discarded. This indicates RCR Level 2.

In response to the question, “*What kind of thinking followed your acceptance of the Trinity?*”, “Lima” wrote:

Just as the Trinity is paradoxical to us, all that he is doing to redeem humanity also contains paradox. I was able to see that Jesus spoke in paradoxes in his teachings. To name a few, for example: we see unseen things; we conquer by yielding; we reign by serving; and we are wise by becoming fools for Christ. Jesus’ mission was filled with the same degree of paradox, such as: Jesus died, yet by his death he destroyed the power of death; Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet he is the Good Shepherd; Jesus began his ministry by being hungry, yet he is the Bread of Life, etc. My fundamental focus of hermeneutics became the incarnate Son of God, who is the Bible.

If by hermeneutics is meant the logic of understanding, then it is implied here that the outcome of Trinitarian thinking was a Christocentric biblical view, but this does not necessarily follow from Trinitarianism (Binitarians are also Christocentric). The idea could have been supported by a consideration of the Chalcedonian Definition (on the two natures of Christ) but that historical matter is absent in the reasoning offered. It appears that once contradiction and paradox were disentangled, “truths” that were presented in paradoxical form need not be rejected. But that “truth” has to be consistent with a view of the Christ paradigm – this is consistent with the premise, but renders invisible (and unchallengeable) the implicit interpretive scheme. As such, this is RCR Level 2-3.

In response to the question, “*How did your acceptance of the Trinity influence your thinking about other doctrines and practices of the WCG?*”, “Lima” wrote:

At first, I did not think that it would have as great an impact as it has. But once my hermeneutical focus was corrected, I could see that there were serious errors

in Armstrongism. Herbert W. Armstrong taught that the New Covenant was not yet in force and that the Old Covenant was no longer in force. He taught that we were living in a time that was between the covenants, which gave him a platform for teaching legalism. With the new found clarity in understanding and hermeneutical focus, we could recover from legalism.

The above response does not offer a logical connection between the Trinity change and other changes, and needs to be put alongside statements elsewhere that the Trinity change was introduced after several other changes were made – those changes could have been more directly related to a covenantal paradigm change than the Trinity. In the new WCG apologia, there is no strong connection between the paradoxes of the Trinity and the law/grace issue. “Lima” might sense a connection and further development of new WCG theology could capitalize on those connections, but in this response it is dormant and RCR Level 2 is suggested.

In response to the question, *“Did the WCG’s acceptance of the Trinity lead to changes in other WCG beliefs? In what way do you think this happened?”*, “Lima” wrote:

Yes – The Trinity gives a superior understanding of grace.

As noted above, “Lima” may have preliminary insight on the connection between Trinity and New Covenant theonomy, specifically in its soteriological intent, but probably is carefully considering (for later official release) a formal statement on the inter-relationship between these concepts. The opportunity to do this was not taken up here, and the response is limited to RCR Level 2. Nevertheless, “Lima’s” response hints at a higher RCR level, if he were pressed to respond further. The fact that “Lima” prefers to communicate (in this instance) in programmatic, uncomplicated language does not preclude his ability to reason at higher RCR levels.

In response to the question, *“Is there anything about the Trinity that isn’t understood by you, or in your view isn’t understandable?”*, “Lima” wrote:

Yes – I don't believe that anyone can fully comprehend God, just as the concept of infinity boggles our minds. The illustration known as Hilbert's Hotel points up absurdities as our finite minds try to grasp infinity as a mathematical concept. For example, it is impossible to completely grasp how God can be outside of time and simultaneously exist in temporality. It is impossible to comprehend how God does not occupy time and space.

The above refers to God's ineffability and paradox in general, rather than the logic of the Trinity. The Hilbert's Hotel illustration (of number regression) does not directly deal with the logic of the intra-Trinitarian relations. It acts as a "reason" for not attempting to wrestle with (or at least say something about) the paradox. It leaves it at RCR Level 2. However, in Piagetian terms, "Lima's" reasoning is relatively sophisticated because he acknowledges the paradoxical nature of the doctrine but identifies it as a specific case of a general class of such problematic notions, and provides analogous examples from a field which others would be more likely to accept.

In response to the question, "*In your view, to what extent do you think other members of the WCG understand the Trinity? (refer to clergy and laity separately if you wish)*", "Lima" wrote:

I believe that some understand it very well, and that others understand it as well as the common church-goer, and that there are some who do not have any grasp at all. I do not know what percentages comprise each group. I do believe that the vast majority have accepted it as true whether they can articulate it well or not.

There is a difference between holding to "correct" belief and having a "correct" understanding of it, and neither of these options establishes the "truth" of the belief. "Lima" rightly points to the uncertainty of WCG understanding of the Trinity belief and it is possible that more acceptance than understanding is involved. As "Lima" is commenting on others, it is not appropriate to estimate his RCR level from the above statement.

In response to the question, "*In your view, why did so many ministers and members find it difficult to accept the WCG's adoption of the Trinity?*", "Lima" wrote:

We believed the doctrine had originated in paganism. We often referred to it as the “false, pagan, trinity doctrine.” Many people thought that it was teaching that there are three separate Gods. Once people saw that the teaching originated as an answer to the pagans, rather than coming from the pagans, there was a breakthrough in understanding.

“Lima” places the origin of the old, anti-Trinitarian view in a superstitious framework. It took a reorientation in worldviews for the WCG to read history otherwise. In a broad sense, it is an either/or situation, that is pagan/not-pagan. There is no middle ground, so the RCR Level 1 is suggested.

In response to the question, “*In your view, to what extent can the transformation of the WCG be attributed to its understanding of the Trinity?*”, “Lima” wrote:

Much transformation preceded it and much followed it. It was an essential part of our journey, but not necessarily the singular cause.

“Lima” in responding to an earlier question had made an unclear connection between the Trinity and grace. “Lima” could have responded to this new question by suggesting that a better understanding of God was emerging whilst these other changes were being made (and that these changes possibly were being made in consequence of that better understanding,) until the idea was formally articulated as the Trinity doctrine. But “Lima” did not pursue any deeper reflection on the changes than the one offered above. In terms of modern Trinitarian theology, much could have been said by “Lima” that properly integrated the Trinity doctrine into the WCG journey, with a better understanding of God being given primary place as the most singular cause. The above line of reasoning is suggested as a contrast to “Lima’s” response. Without this perspective, “Lima’s” response is RCR Level 2.

In response to the question, “*In your view, is the Trinity logical? How could the logic of the Trinity be explained?*”, Lima wrote:

It possesses a logic that is appropriate to God, not to the physical creation.

Without explanation, the logic of God and the logic of God's works are divorced. The response also does not engage with the relationship between God's thinking (perhaps expressed as communication of God by God) and the "interior" relationships (communicating within Himself), and is RCR Level 1.

In response to the question, "*Do you have any other comments on the role of the Trinity in the WCG's transformation?*", "Lima" wrote:

No.

"Lima" provided no other information about the WCG's acceptance of the Trinity doctrine, or why traditional WCG doctrines had been abandoned, but those issues have been addressed in Chapter 5.

In summary, "Lima's" RCR status is at the earliest stages, if we are to go by his responses to the above questions, and under-developed since this survey gave him the opportunity to give substantive reasons for the WCG's transformation in terms of the Trinity, probably the quintessential focus of Christianity (since it grounds and contextualizes its Christology, is central to the standing of Christians and their way of life and worship, and is fundamental to salvation). Yet the beginning of such insight is there, and could be developed if allowed to engage further with critical thinking and more elaborative expositions. Despite "Lima's" evident intelligence and sincere grasp of his beliefs, at this point an overall RCR Level of 2 is proposed.

6.14 Respondent "Mike"

This respondent has retired from the WCG's administration. He takes a balanced view in regard to the preliminary questions, in that he is open to explanations that reconcile if not transcend the questions. But how does this equate to an RCR level? In respect of Creation-Evolution, "Mike" believes that both approaches need not disagree and, in regard to the Trinity, is content not to have perfect academic understanding. He is aware of the nature of quantum physics (particle and wave characteristics of light) and uncertainty about ways of describing reality, based on his own scientific background. "Mike" writes "We have to be willing to accept the 'fuzziness' of our

understanding and look beyond that.” He also expresses a humanitarian attitude towards belief, so that differences do not lead to conflict:

Man has killed fellow man over this doctrine of the Trinity. A doctrine that is so hard to fully appreciate or define. What a tragedy for supposedly simply trying to understand the nature of a loving God.

“Mike’s” sentiments come closest to Reich’s sub-text for RCR, which is to encourage harmony between viewpoints and, hopefully, peace between ideologically divided people. Regarding the level of RCR, however, “Mike” provides responses that are too brief for extended analysis.

“Mike” doesn’t think that the Trinity was the start of the “domino effect” for change. However, he thinks that the start of the Trinity doctrine change was rooted in the reappraisal of Armstrong’s definition of a “uniplural” God (Elohim). “Mike’s” answer re the Trinity is promising but undeveloped. “Some things will probably defy exact definition and will remain a mystery.” No attempt is made to explain the concept using a higher order of reasoning. In fact, for most of the remaining questions, short (undeveloped) responses were given.

In regard to the WCG changes, he says “We spent a whole lot of time trying to explain ‘difficult’ scriptures that suddenly were not difficult any longer,” but no explanation for this is given. Again, the Trinity “need not be the focus and the fixation of a Church.” Finally, “Mike” says “The “Trinity” is found in the Bible. And from that I believe it is logical and necessary to believe in it.” This seems to be a subordination of reasoning to belief, and it is difficult to discern evidence of RCR beyond Level 2. “Mike’s” high intelligence and potential for a higher rating notwithstanding, he remains a part of a religious system that has not encouraged the free exercise of intellect.

6.15 Postscript: Dr Herman L. Hoeh, Board Member

Hoeh (1928-2004) was ordained by Herbert Armstrong in 1950 and was considered to be influential in the development of the WCG’s traditional theological system. He was senior editor of the *Plain Truth* magazine for many years, and taught

church history and theology at Ambassador College. He was on the WCG's Council of Elders and Board of Directors, until his death in November 2004. Hoeh telephoned unexpectedly in January 2004, and offered his views on the WCG transformation. This was not a formal interview, following the questionnaire sent to WCG leaders, but a cordial discussion about common interests. Since this hour-long discussion was not recorded, apart from extempore notes, the following points are offered as general background.

Regarding the process of change, Hoeh admitted that doctrines were changed on a piecemeal basis, outside of a systematic theological framework, by the WCG leadership and that he was not privy to most of the deliberations. However, Hoeh felt that his position in the new hierarchy represented a "legitimising" link with the past. He conceded that Herbert Armstrong would have come to some of the new conclusions if he had lived. However, Hoeh doubted that Armstrong would have gone down the Trinitarian path since his central theological dogma was committed to the "God Family" idea. Otherwise, Hoeh appeared to accept continuity between the old and new church in that the WCG was, in his view, always a genuine Christian enterprise. He accepted the explanation of change in the WCG as "new understanding," rather than radical betrayal of foundational doctrine. This ambiguity has drawn much criticism from former members (Dewey, 2004; Lapacka, 2001; Salyer, 1997) and several "cult watchers" (Arn, 1997; Ditzel, 1997; Sumner, 2000). A former associate of Hoeh, Richard Nickels (1996, p.217), placed a negative interpretation on Hoeh's ability to adapt to changes in official WCG doctrine. Hoeh did not return the questionnaire and only general aspects about RCR were discernible from the telephone interview. However, those who knew Hoeh will not contest the view that Hoeh was capable of surprising and innovative thinking, late in his life taking into account Buddhist themes that transcended the WCG conventions. The fact that he continued to be involved in the new WCG theological discussions was a sign of his flexibility.

6.16 Conclusion and Final RCR Assessment

Most of the above respondents suggested that the Trinity doctrine was changed after several other key beliefs were abandoned, but some perceived the nature of God to be a significant aspect of the change momentum. Responses given throughout this

survey show that the theological ramifications of Trinitarian thought are still being developed in the WCG. There does not appear to have been a consistent elevation or stimulation of RCR levels in WCG leaders, although several of the middle management level ministers reveal a mature grasp of the new doctrines, and helpfully elaborate their positions much better for the RCR analysis. But if we were stop with Tkach and Feazell – those most likely to have effected the changes – then on the basis of such a small sample we can conclude that high RCR (by itself) had a minimal role in initiating or defining the changes (whether re the Trinity or other doctrines).

This again raises the question about how much the WCG's adoption of the Trinity had to do with the level of RCR thinking in WCG leaders responsible for the change. Paradoxically, those leaders highest in the hierarchy, hence most responsible for the adoption of the Trinity, seem to have a mediocre RCR level (based on their written responses – even though they may otherwise demonstrate a much higher level) whilst some of those employed at intermediate levels in the hierarchy, who needed to explain the changes, had higher RCR levels. Reich (2002b, p.125) admitted that RCR was “necessary but insufficient” for such changes. That the above respondents, in the main, all thought in RCR terms (even level 1 qualifies) confirms that RCR was “necessary” for them to come to a Trinitarian position, whether to formulate or to explain the doctrine. But the RCR component is evidently insufficient. Perhaps it depends on how much weight can be placed on the terms “necessity” and “sufficiency”

Understanding of the Trinity, in terms of our hypothesis, requires some presence of RCR although at higher levels the understanding will be more developed. The “insufficiency” of RCR refers to other considerations – knowledge and motivation. It may be that a low RCR level is compensated for by some knowledge but, more importantly, higher levels of motivation (which could be extrinsic to religious conversion). Those with higher RCR evidently also have higher knowledge; their perception of the intrinsic value and importance of the Trinity may be the basis of their motivation, and they are more likely to have experienced a deeper religious conversion. The simple **adoption** of the doctrine does not require RCR, although some of the knowledge and motivation (related to the above) may be similar to those who do have true understanding.

TABLE 6.1

RELATIVE RCR ESTIMATES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY			
RESPONDENT		Preliminary Questions	Main Questionnaire
Names of each respondent are recorded in confidential files at the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney		Estimate of Composite RCR Level	Estimate of General RCR Level
		1	Alpha
2	Bravo	1	1
3	Charlie	1	2
4	Delta	2-3	4-5
5	Echo	4	4
6	Foxtrot	1-2	2
7	Golf	2-3	3
8	Hotel	4-5	4-5
9	India	1-2	2
10	Julius	1	1
11	Kilo	1	1
12	Lima	1-2	2
13	Mike	1-2	2
Most common (= mode) =		1-2	2

CHAPTER 7

Discussion and Conclusion:

Is Relational and Contextual Reasoning a necessary condition for understanding the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity? – and,

Does Relational and Contextual Reasoning have the capacity to explain the Worldwide Church of God's transformation?

7.1 General considerations

A full critique of Reich's theory of relational and contextual reasoning (RCR), *qua* theory (Littlejohn, 1999), would entail consideration of several factors, including the organization of knowledge involved. This has been a difficult task as Reich's numerous papers and his main book, *Developing the Horizons of the Mind* (Reich, 2002b) are presented as compilations of material which, although held together by a common thread of "complementarity" theory, at first glance appear to have tenuous relationships. Reich suggests that this is unavoidable given the nature of the material and is a virtue of the presentation since it corresponds to the theoretical position argued. Within this broad range of often disparate material, there are a number of variables which, like Rubik's Cube, are twisted in various directions as a way of bringing the variables to bear on the main argument. In this way, surprising relationships between variables become apparent, sometimes overcoming the appearance of chaos and demonstrating the theory of complementarity in action. Precise quantification of these associations is not appropriate to this theory (unless unusually complex mathematics is attempted) but the use of interpretive reasoning produces an outcome that is generally satisfactory as a heuristic approach to both explaining and demonstrating the usefulness of the proposed theory. As the generative function of theory is to encourage new ways of thinking and doing research, Reich's theory is eminently suitable for the purposes of the present thesis, which is to inquire into the transformation of an enigmatic religious sect via its adoption of a paradoxical teaching on the tri-unity of God.

7.2 Expectations of RCR theory

Whereas the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) continues to undergo various reforms, of interest here is the cognitive transformation of the WCG's leadership – in terms of their expanded horizons (worldviews) and enhanced comprehension of doctrinal formulations. Reich's theoretical approach entailed a consideration of the relationship between complementarity, cognition, and central propositions of the Christian faith: the two natures of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity. Coincidentally, these matters were profound sites of controversy, and possibly catalysts for change, in the WCG's transformation.

The challenge was to harness the theoretical material to the task of delineating changes in comprehension of these beliefs, and analysing their relationship to the development of thinking in their protagonists. At its most basic level, the question was whether or not the WCG leaders thought in terms of complementarity or Relational and Contextual Reasoning (RCR) as a component of their acceptance of these doctrines, and whether this made any difference to their self-identity and further accommodation to orthodox beliefs. Regrettably, the lack of opportunity at this time to personally interview the respondents, to probe deeper into their reasoning processes, truncated the present thesis's scope.

Reich draws on various discipline fields each of which contains contested interpretations, and theories which themselves are problematic. The macro areas are Psychology/Pedagogy, Logic/Linguistics, and Philosophy/Theology. In the case of psychology/pedagogy, developmental ideas are prominent, with an attempt made to relate various stage theorists. There is room here also for the role of cognitive dissonance. In the case of logic/linguistics, drawing on the ideas and language of quantum physics, Reich challenges classical Aristotelian reasoning. In the case of philosophy/theology, Reich is dealing with the idea of truth being relational, but derived from relational being-ness (that is, the Trinity).

At the most general level, Reich is advancing an approach to knowledge and knowing (that is, epistemology) that is constituted and guided by a set of logical principles. But it is not clear yet if complementarity (or RCR) -

- (1) is a type of logic used as an alternative to classical logic, so that it is more able to successfully deal with concepts on its own terms (as logic) and in terms of the matters investigated (their "logic" - which may appear as contradictory or illogical),

OR

- (2) is a super (or meta) logic that brings together disparate logical relations. That is, RCR is not a competing logical system, but an overarching logic (metalogue) that excludes itself from lower-level comparison with the logics being overarched.

Thus Reich's theory - and to some extent the present thesis - tends towards an abstract approach to human transformation. However, change may be more than the exchange of variables, and be more of a restructuring of the relationships between variables. Of more specific concern, however, is the identification of the way RCR actually functions as reasoning, *per se*. If it is another type of logic - competing with conventional logics - then it should have features that are commensurable. But if it is another level of logic altogether - indeed a metalogue - then it probably cannot be made operational and consequently may be untestable. This again confirms the hermeneutical approach taken in the present thesis, wherein (as far as possible) the Reichian heuristic is internalized for the purpose of analysing the theory, from "within." Indeed, this is the approach encouraged by Reich himself (personal discussion, 2004).

Although the general insights of RCR have proven to be stimulating, and have provided a broad approach to dealing with paradoxical beliefs, perhaps tending towards an idealisation of the theory's potential to deliver helpful outcomes (such as reduction of cognitive dissonance, harmonization of competing worldviews, deeper understanding of the meaning of religious belief, and identification with an acceptable common faith) through its application, there was some difficulty in matching these considerations with actual examples as, within Reich's writings, there are many loose connections between theory and application. His writing, sometimes translated from German, suffers from some vagueness, ambiguity, lacunae and shifts in definitions.

7.3 Complementarity and RCR heuristics

The initial focus on “Complementarity” resulted from its use in the physics discipline but there is some ambiguity in the term’s use, which seems to vary according to the emphasis placed on how concepts are relatable. The physics use of the term, following Bohr, referred to dualities (or multiple dimensions) where all sides are acceptable, together and in context, which suits well the concept of the two natures of Christ and the three-ness of the Trinity. However, the common meaning of the term, applied to collaborative or even united relations, tended to obscure the essential character of the intended meaning of the term in this theory. It could be taken as a device for harmonizing different positions, perhaps reducing them to a conjoint entity, to foster peace and overcome conflict. Yet such a view (reductive singularity) is detrimental to the idea of the Trinity, which requires something other than separate “Beings” who merely “co-operate.” The neologistic expression, relational and contextual reasoning, was intended to overcome such ambiguity. However, apart from highlighting some of the problems arising from use of the term “complementarity,” Reich does not demonstrate that there is any empirically-grounded difference and, in the present thesis, the terms have been used interchangeably.

The creation of a non-physical interpretative schema based on Bohr’s idea of complementarity has not met with universal support, and it appears to be one of those ideas that sound too good to be dismissed regardless of how difficult it is to validate them empirically. From an extensive review of Reich’s writings (over 100 items), it appears that two characteristics stand out. First, as admitted by Reich, the pieces are argued in a style representative of the theory (that is, diverse theoretical material is assembled as though there were contingent relations between them, somewhat like “bricolage,” a structuralist term for an improvisation whereby signs are re-signified through their appropriation into different meaning systems). Another characteristic is that the empirical grounding for various propositions is often retrospectively referenced. Closer examination of such bases for support reveals that the empirical work relied upon was in fact provisional, and limited in generalizability. The evidence for the theoretical conclusions, in the selected case studies used, seems to be inconclusive and manifestly subjective, even though sometimes re-presented with complicated statistics.

There is also the disjuncture between the eight step heuristic – really a desiderata for interdisciplinary research – and the five level RCR model. Even if the heuristic is intended to guide research into the discovery of the presence of RCR, and the levels are the outcome of that inquiry, the connection is presumed rather than established empirically. Furthermore, the outcome of these multiple strands of inquiry is a composite notion which can be explained only imprecisely, thus making the determination of RCR levels subjective and arbitrary yet useful as a general guide, taking into account other considerations. There is some confusion in the language used to describe these points of reference but, and this may well be expected of an eclectic system of thought, the argument is sustained by its own terms and definitions.

7.4 Stages or levels?

It is possible to surmise from Reich's writings that RCR may be dormant in people's reasoning. That is not to say that in such cases people are incapable of rational processes or are deficient in intelligence. It simply means that the person is limited to (a matter of capacity or horizon, innately or constrained by indoctrination, for example) or prefers (a matter of motive) thinking in a way that takes one dimension too far. Reich refers to empirical studies which identify RCR (complementarity-thinking) in children and adolescents (in fact, such studies form the basis of much of the general claims for RCR), yet claims that RCR is innate to all humans ("it does not arrive fully operative at a person's birth," although it is sometimes not evident until late in life or not at all (Reich 2003d, p.21). The assumption is that RCR can be nurtured or stimulated out of its latency and then towards higher levels.

Yet Reich's RCR scale (**Appendix B1**), consisting of five levels "of RCR," actually commences with an ambiguous Level 1 that is either pre-RCR or low-level RCR. To posit RCR as an "either/or" phenomenon is inconsistent with complementarity anyway, on the basis of relativity theory. That means that everybody, manifestly or potentially, is an RCR operator. Level 1 predominantly applies to the consideration of alternatives, with adoption of one, but Reich allows for the occasional tentative holding of more than one option. This might be taken as a weak form of RCR, which requires development. This offers a position intermediate to a more pronounced consideration of several alternatives as being acceptable, albeit subject to differential

weighting (Level 2). This can be deemed to be RCR proper, but it remains undeveloped. It probably can be stimulated, but with difficulty in those who have become habituated to binary (either/or) thinking. The correspondence between these levels and developmental “stages” (even as far as suggesting a commensurate, if not intertwined, co-operation with, for example, Piagetian, Kohlbergian, Eriksonian or other formal stages) is unclear. Also absent are rules of progression – is this a linear, stepped ascent? Can levels be bypassed, or can there be descent in some cases?

In *Developing the Horizons of the Mind*, Reich (2002b) admits that in relation to formulating RCR, a limited number of pilot studies were attempted but admits that these were methodologically flawed. That is, sampling was small and unrepresentative, the studies were not longitudinal (thus limiting the identification of change in RCR), and the aspect of analogical and dialectical thinking was excluded. Appendix 2 of the book is entitled “Scoring Manual for RCR”. However, this is complicated, limited in scope and short on detail, and relies heavily on subjective interpretations.

7.5 RCR and the Trinity

It is asserted by Reich (2002b, p.125) that:

The main findings of both studies on the intelligibility of Christian doctrines [referring to the Two Natures of Christ and the three-ness of the Trinity] is that RCR appears to be **a necessary but insufficient condition** for an intellectually acceptable understanding of the doctrines studied. Specific knowledge and interest (motivation) are needed in addition if the potential competence is to show up in the actual performance [emphasis added].

In this claim, RCR has no absolute threshold criterion. As the RCR table (**Appendix B1**) commences at Level 1, a minimal sign of awareness of the existence of alternatives from which one may be selected could be counted as being a minimal RCR level. Reich’s description allows for several choices to be held “tentatively,” “depending on chance knowledge or socialisation.” This minimalist position is consistent with the wave/particle characteristic of light (as presented by complementarity theory). It means that a person may be aware of the rudiments of the

belief and even hold it extrinsically, perhaps through imposition by the church hierarchy.

For the belief to become more “intelligible,” however, a higher RCR Level is prescribed. Despite having a better grasp of the doctrine, thus operating at a higher RCR level, a person may not have a sincere conviction of it and may even continue to reject it. One possibility is that an alternative belief (for example, binitarianism) also has some RCR characteristics and may be intellectually satisfying to some. In any event, the lower RCR level is adequate as a necessary condition for some knowledge but is insufficient for an “intellectually acceptable understanding,” which is evident from the rather abstract discussions on the Trinity.

Regarding further “sufficiency,” this can be met in at least two ways. Firstly, a higher level of RCR would be needed. Indeed, Reich (Huber, Reich & Schenker, 2000, p.9) claim that **“a high level of RCR is a necessary condition for understanding rationally the doctrines concerned.”** [emphasis added]. This position appears to require at least RCR Level 3 for an understanding of the Trinity, but the concept of “rational” needs to be taken into account. If, in fact, a basic grasp of the Trinity is possible at RCR Level 1 (as shown by some WCG literature and some survey respondents), then it may be assumed that at that level the rational grasp is insufficient, and is only a “potential competence.” A more adequate level of understanding is possible at RCR Level 3, but satisfactory familiarity with the concept (if not an ability to competently explain the “logic” of it) is sufficient for designation at Level 1 (preferably a high Level 1 or overlap with Level 2).

The second way to compensate for insufficiency involves “Specific knowledge and interest (motivation)” (Reich, 2002b, p.125). Designation at RCR Level 1 need not be a frozen evaluation, as further knowledge should provide the terms and relations of the concept, and nurture understanding if not compel belief. The wish for deeper conversion may itself prove to be a powerful motivator for further engagement with the meaning and significance of the doctrine, especially in relation to a range of theological dimensions. As pointed out earlier in the present thesis, the doctrine of the Trinity is closely related to Christology, but it also is connected to the matter of salvation and the

quality of a religious life. In the WCG's case, it has importance for resolving tensions between grace and legalism, faith and works, freedom and authority.

That RCR is a "necessary condition" for understanding the Trinity can be dealt with by referring to the results of the empirical studies reported in chapters 5 and 6. A conservative position on applying the RCR scale resulted in modest levels being assigned in most cases. The materials and responses evaluated, hermeneutically, showed in most cases a minimal but acceptable grasp of the Trinity. In some of these instances, the explanation of the Trinity showed potential for development yet, in their present form, could not qualify for a higher level. It is quite possible that a higher estimate could have been assigned if respondents had been more motivated or follow-up interviews had been possible. Therefore the initial assessment is not demeaning to the respondents, and is simply an indication of how their written responses fared given the limited opportunity to probe deeper into their reasoning processes. Furthermore, the ratings should not be taken as being frozen evaluations as some time has elapsed since responses were sought and the respondents have had further opportunity to read a spate of books on the Trinity published in the meantime. Older WCG literature and schismatic tracts, on the other hand, were taken at face value.

Specific correspondences between the Reichian model and literature or verbatim responses were extremely difficult to identify. This was no simple coding exercise, as arguments (of whatever length) needed identification, then assessment against the benchmark of Reich's scale. It was possible to assemble a large number of items (produced by the early WCG and various offshoots that retain the WCG's abandoned doctrines) which, in their overall character, were indicative of either an absolutist or dualistic tendency. In the absence of any signs of "complementarity" thinking, or a position on the RCR scale other than at the most elementary, either/or position, such materials supported Reich's prediction that such pre-Trinitarian literature would have non- or low-RCR characteristics. In fact, in the written materials perused, the style was invariably dogmatic and intolerant of other views, except to set up contrived comparisons. The level of RCR may have been adequate but certainly not sufficient for the adoption of the Trinity doctrine by many of these protagonists.

7.6 Prospects for RCR as a theory

The “truth” of Reich’s theory can be questioned in a non-relativist context, to ask if Reich’s theory enables us to present an accurate, plausible and consistent interpretation of the WCG’s transformation. As Dallas Willard (1999, p.1), says:

We’ve come to the point in our culture today where it is the concept of reason and truth itself that requires redemption. Reason and truth itself, especially in the arena of human affairs has lost its foundation because of misunderstandings about truth, misunderstandings about relativity, about how we are conscious of objects.

Having said this, and giving due credit to Reich’s rich and imaginative compilation of ideas, the present thesis’s expectations were not entirely satisfied. Apart from the general value of approaching complexity and paradox with complex and paradoxical ways of thinking, it was hoped to discover more prominent signs of cognitive transformation in the Worldwide Church of God, and in associated literature. As an interpretive psychological task, the purpose was to ascertain whether there was any detectable change in thinking along the lines of complementarity. Three benefits were anticipated:

- The study could have supported the idea that a change in thinking (in this case, in terms of RCR) was indeed necessary to comprehend a complex and paradoxical belief (in this case, the Trinity);
- As a corollary to the above, it might have been possible to use the results concerning the Trinity as a prediction that those who used higher RCR levels (as evidenced by their grasp of the Trinity belief) could and probably would engage more satisfactorily with other complex and paradoxical beliefs; and
- Given the above outcomes, there might be an indication of genuineness in grasping new beliefs (that otherwise would have been rejected as being “illogical”) to present a more consistent profile of adopting new beliefs according to their logical characteristics.

A further possibility, should the above not have been realized as anticipated, was that there could be some indication of a disparity between an individual's profession of a belief and their capacity to grasp it, giving rise to other explanations for the belief's adoption. As spiritual phenomena are excluded in this kind of study, such an outcome could have guided future research in the exploration of other grounds for exchanging beliefs and raised new questions concerning the meaning of transformation.

Fundamentally, Reich's theory is unclear about the contextual distinctions between the use of reason, or the matter of choice or motives for reasoning at certain levels. It may be that those who are capable of reasoning at the highest level, nevertheless, are versatile enough to reason at any level to suit the context and their purposes. Presumably, those most at home at the basic level would find it challenging to operate at the higher levels. But there is nothing in Reich's theory that would prevent anyone from having a simple (barely sufficient) grasp of the doctrine of the Trinity, even at RCR Level 1.

The present thesis has been offered as an exploration of an idea, supposedly anchored in empirical reality, to test the scope of its suitability for understanding human transformation, at least in the cognitive domain. The results, notwithstanding their shortcomings, are offered as a plausible account of a profound turning point in the history of a religious organization and in the lives of its members. The visionary aspect of RCR covers many fields, across the rainbow of human endeavour, as a heuristic to stimulate the quest for human freedom and realization of potential in a world subject to conflict and adversity. Helmut Reich has taken his grand idea thus far, in the hope that benefits will accrue to those who follow this path, in their own way.

7.7 Implications for the Worldwide Church of God

Joseph Tkach (2005) holds out hope that the controversies surrounding the WCG transformation are over. He writes:

God wanted us to change, and he pulled us about as fast as we could go through thickets, swamps, twisting canyons and raging rivers But now it seems we

have turned a corner ...We have shed the vestiges of the past, and now have a new start in the ministry Christ has called us to.

With this settling of the past (a condition not shared by many of the WCG's detractors), Tkach is open to further developments in the WCG. However, the uncertainty over the WCG's conversion is that there are opposing sets of "fruits" – on one hand, the evident spiritual recrudescence of many of its members and fellowships, continuing spiritual formation along the lines of traditional Christianity, and the growing theological sophistication of its ministers; juxtaposed against this is the considerable disquiet among former and marginalized members about the alleged methods and motives of the leaders in introducing change, the charges of failing to disown the heretical past, the prospect of material gain by the current leaders, and the apparent continuation of an authoritarian infrastructure. These two paradigms can hardly be reconciled, even though from the perspective of each position they may contain incontrovertible truths.

Can "thinking in terms of complementarity" assist the WCG in its journey of faith? Facing up to the contradictions and paradoxes in its transition from sect to church would be helpful, as the WCG continues to be poised between the assumed "legitimacy" of the past which the WCG must cling to in order to justify its existence, even though those foundations have largely crumbled and been repudiated, and its new identity as a Christian church which might only be justified in terms of its release from the past. During times of transition, such boundary spanning is inevitable, even if it attracts charges of duplicity or prevarication. Critics of the WCG probably would be satisfied if the current leadership simply acknowledged what the WCG was and attempted reconciliation, if not restitution, with those allegedly harmed by its alleged abusive system. The greatest irony is that the old system's authoritarian governance was instrumental in bringing the church and its people to a new realization for its need for liberty and grace, but critics point out that the continuation of the WCG's claim to Christian legitimacy in the past, supported by its current hierarchic system, can only perpetuate the abuses and place a barrier against reconciliation.

From whatever value the preceding study might have produced, it is evident that the WCG leaders may not be fully utilizing their potential for complementarity thinking.

Defensiveness about the past makes it difficult to break into new ground, where an authentic co-existence of what is valuable in the old and the new is possible. The doctrine of the Trinity (at least the kind of thinking that underlies it) lends promise to the future of WCG theological developments. An integrated theology, in which the Trinitarian concept is threaded throughout, should structure the growth of the belief system according to relational (and contextual) principles consistent with the historic doctrine of God.

Yet there continue to be troubling aspects of the WCG experience, leading to conflicted associations with the formal church. “Thought reform” is a concept that has been connected with people joining cults, and the idea has stirred up a considerable controversy in the case of new religious movements (Dawson, 2003). The assumed process of mind manipulation is said to take place in a number of ways, but it is always in the interests of the organization attracting and holding members. The WCG has been condemned by embittered former members (Ancona, 1990; Dewey, 2004; Stuhlman, n.d.) for being such an enterprise. The irony is that the earlier condemnations of Armstrongism referred to people being improperly persuaded to accept a particular belief system; now the WCG is accused of using similar tactics to change (in some instances, reverse) the belief system. As the “brainwashing” theory is itself controversial (with proponents such as Singer, 2003, and sceptics such as Robbins, 2003), it will not be pursued here. However, it is noted that the categories, formulas and certainties of the anti-cult literature seem to be readily appropriated by ex-cultists in trying to make sense of their experiences. Undoubtedly the WCG was “cultish” but it did not necessarily resemble or operate like all other cults nor were the experiences of all its members the same. There are many accounts of happy, wholesome experiences.

In regard to the members that remain, it is not possible to determine the depth of their share in the transformation process (the matter of leaders will be dealt with below). Bullough (2003, p. 2) writes:

That a church could essentially abandon all of its basic doctrines after the death of its founder, publicly at least imply that its founder was a fraud, and still manage to retain even a modicum of its believers is indicative of just how strong is the will to believe for vast numbers of people.

As has been intimated earlier in the present thesis, continuing WCG members share in a general condition inherited from the past. Their assumption is that they were “converted” in a true Christian sense during the former days (and this would include the transition period up to the mid 1990s). This conversion and exclusivist sect experience is strongly linked with traditional Armstrongism and it would be difficult to repudiate one without the other.

From the responses by WCG leaders, about the membership in general (if not themselves), it may be assumed that some older beliefs (at least the way of thinking typical of them) are resilient underneath a veneer of conformity to current WCG polity. These people are in the WCG not necessarily because of the new beliefs but despite them. In the absence of a strong presence of the older beliefs and practices, and with uncertainty over the new beliefs, there is an impetus of relying on an intimate “relationship with Christ.” Doctrines in the WCG have changed before and, it may be reasoned, they will change again. As Barrett (2003, p.496) says:

Some members who completely reject the new teachings are still in the WCG today because they believe that God founded that Church through Herbert W. Armstrong, and so they must remain in that Church even if it is now teaching what to them is outright heresy.

The underlying assumption by some is that the WCG still is the “true church” even though now only a part of the larger Christian world. The reasoning is that the remarkable transformation is undoubtedly a sign of God’s special interest in the WCG. This could even be demonstrated at the highest level of leadership – why, after all, would the Tkachs (father and son) feel compelled to draw the entire WCG into their new-found beliefs rather than terminating their own membership, if they did not believe that the WCG was a church specially elected by God? Any other interpretation does not make sense, or raises speculation about motives.

After the late 1970s’ defections, some went into a New Covenant, charismatic direction. They interpreted their past WCG experience as tutelage for the future. Storey (1979, p.16) wrote, “The WCG has done its job. It has prepared a people under the law for the ministry of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.” This affirmed that the past

WCG was God's church, but has now been superseded. Likewise, after the late 1990s defections, Tkach Senior was interpreted by some as God's instrument to demolish the WCG, as a test to the remaining members. "Mr. Tkach actually 'accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people', probably without even realizing what he was doing" (Waitz, 2000, p.363).

All of this might explain (but not justify) the alleged continuing authoritarian nature of the WCG. On the question of church authority, Barrett (2003, p.512) refers to the legacy of a leadership model where the leader, appointed by God, is always right; but if wrong, still had to be obeyed as God was in charge. This has been the traditional disposition of WCG members and continues to be the case in the current WCG as well as in many of the schismatic groups where, allegedly, former WCG dictators continue to rule. Regarding the WCG's current ministerial elite, they assume that their ordination under Armstrong and all that it stood for has continuing validity. There is an affinity with conservative leadership models, with God-selected (Gangel, 1997, p.82) leaders even though they are "transformed" into servants (pp. 69-71). In the current WCG, led by "second generation" leaders, "who have been subject to a continuous stream of religious propaganda since childhood" (Schwarz, 1970, p.68), there may be an internalized belief in the rightness of their actions and entitlement to position which contradicts that servant model.

Although this section began with Tkach's announcement of new beginnings, some perform a whistle-blower role as does the following lay pastor (Gideon, 2004, pp.3-4; the name is a pseudonym). In an article entitled, "The WCG still practices Armstrongism," he states that "the church hasn't become more orthodox in substance" and makes the following disturbing claims about the current ministry:

under Herbert Armstrong they were taught to give whatever answer the pastor general told them to, even if it was opposite to what the answer was yesterday. The point is that the WCG might be able to tell you right doctrine, but that doctrine does not necessarily lead to a 'new creation' in Christ. It takes more than a parroting of orthodoxy to be orthodox.

This is sourced to the entrenched authoritarianism of the WCG, which is “the heart of Armstrongism,” allegedly still beating strongly despite the cosmetic changes to the sect’s official beliefs. Gideon (p.4) asks:

If the pastor general uses Armstrongism control techniques to force his preferences and beliefs on another, then has he really converted them to orthodoxy or to himself? we can never know if the WCG has truly embraced its own orthodox statement of beliefs.

Therefore:

should Dr Tkach or some other future pastor general decide to go in a different direction, the ministers will flip flop for him and make the members follow, just as they did under Herbert Armstrong.

These are harsh observations. If they are representative of a number of WCG members, then the WCG’s journey towards transformation is fraught with unresolved difficulties. Yet Gideon’s opinion resonates with several of the statements made by Feazell (2001) and senior WCG ministers in chapter 6. Not only was there some doubt about their commitment to, or grasp of, the new doctrines, some predicted that the WCG’s overall transformation is shallow and could be overturned under a new administration. This is plausible since some of the remaining members are more committed to the WCG as the true church than they are to doctrine and will follow whatever is taught. After all, it appears that the “logic” of the new beliefs bears some resemblance to the logic of the old. The same kind of thinking may underlie it.

This incipient authoritarianism could be related to the kind of reasoning that the leaders are disposed towards. As shown in the previous chapters, there is little evidence of the WCG leaders thinking at an RCR level commensurate with the expectations of the complex doctrines now espoused, and the organization has perpetuated elements of totalitarian control in its new Church Manual (WCG, 2003). It is also possible that even the “highest” levels of RCR, where present, might be appealed to in the service of the underlying authoritarianism, for those who have a strong need for rationalizing their privileged position of leadership.

Apart from lamenting this state of affairs, it is realistic to assume that as the WCG leaders recognize their cognitive tendencies there will be a reappraisal of the entire legitimacy of the WCG as a Christian church. This reappraisal is not a rejection of the members' genuine aspirations. Rather, it would be a recontextualization of their identity. In Trinitarian terms that prospect is already unfolding but it might take a commitment to radical change to a new level for it to be realized in word and deed. The psychological adjustments and practical tasks implied in the above re-creation of identity of the WCG leaders and members might be thoughtfully related to engagement with the tenets of relational and contextual reasoning, expressed suitably in the Trinity.

7.8 Conversion based on grace and not on logic

The WCG is clearly shown to have struggled with its sectarian history to attain a new religious identity. It is evident that the WCG did not reason itself into new doctrines, on the basis of its own intellectual strengths, but continues to search for better understanding. Its identity as a Christian church seeks to be consistent with the tenets of historical Christianity, which it now embraces.

In the past, Armstrong (1978) commented on the idea of "conversion" that now can be applied to his legacy:

There is a sense in which true conversion does take place at a definite time – all at once. But it is also true that in another sense conversion is worked out gradually – a process of development and growth (p.128).

In the case of survey responses, there was hope in finding signs of complex reasoning and in most cases it was present. In regard to the "test case" of the Trinity, its threshold level was low so it was justifiable to credit understanding of the doctrine with a modest place on the RCR scale. Some respondents were able to give an adequate account of the Trinity, with the minimal characteristics of RCR Level 1. Whilst a higher level incorporated more flexibility of thinking, this did not mean that Level 1 was inadequate. There were some more advanced conceptualisations, but these were by senior ministers who were not in the highest leadership positions.

The simple adoption of the doctrine of the Trinity, with the lowest RCR level (or even without any credible understanding of the doctrine), may have been compensated for by further education and enhanced motivation, eventually resulting in a satisfactory grasp of the concept. Several WCG respondents admitted that this was their experience. Ironically, the highest WCG leaders were among the lowest RCR scorers (based on written responses to the survey – assessment of their level may have been increased should personal interviews have been conducted, as envisaged by the original research design). It is possible that the WCG leaders, especially Joseph Tkach, will find comfort in the supposition that their conversion was based not on human reasoning, nor on strategic planning, but on surprising and overwhelming grace, thus (in their minds) justifying their attribution of the WCG’s transformation to spiritual and not to psychological causes. In that light, the WCG’s proposed change of name (to incorporate the word “Grace”) is understandable and it is hoped that the above insights into the WCG’s transformation have been helpful.

7.9 Final comment

The present thesis has attempted to explicate RCR, in terms of psychology (with reference to theology), using interpretive methodology. Its heuristic value will involve further development of Reich’s insights into religious worldview transformation. The validity of the topic, theory and approach can be judged by its conceptual and pragmatic value. Important questions of change in the lives of people have been addressed and it is hoped that the findings can be generalized to the experience of change in other religious organizations. Finally, further research in the character and applicability of relational and contextual reasoning is encouraged.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A Eight Step Heuristic
 Reprinted from Reich 2002b
- Appendix B Description of RCR Levels
- A1 Reprinted from Reich 2002b
- A2 Reprinted from Reich 2003d
- A3 Reprinted from Reich 1991
 (also found in Paloutzian 1996)
- Appendix C Complexification and Conceptual Changes
 When Moving from One to Two
- Reprinted from Reich 2002b
- Appendix D Exhibits for the Application of RCR
- C1 Tkach Sr. PGR 17 Dec 91
- C2 Tkach Sr. PGR 18 Aug 92
- C3 Tkach St. PGR 10 Aug 93
- C4 Tkach Sr. PGR 21 Jun 94
- Appendix E Survey Instrument of 22 December 2003.

Whereas applying RCR 'tacitly' may already be quite helpful, its full potential becomes fruitful when the RCR heuristic is applied systematically.

Here are the complete eight steps (Reich 1990b, 1990d):

(1) clarifying and defining, at least tentatively, the entity, the phenomenon, the event, the functionally coherent whole which constitutes the explanandum;

(2) listing all descriptions/explanations/models/theories/interpretations A, B, C ... of the explanandum, even if they are considered incompatible or incommensurable by the ambient culture, possibly adding new ones, and dealing with any conflicts and contradictions arising (which may mean throwing out either A or B or C - it is possibly not a case for RCR) (mastering different logics and means-reflecting thought, cf. ch. 2, pp. 29-32, is particularly important for dealing with this step);

(3) ascertaining that A, B, C ... are genuinely coextensive, that they refer to the identical explanandum;

(4) establishing the circumstances, the context, under which A, B, C ... describe or explain particular aspects of the explanandum, and, if a genuine understanding does not come forth, reconsidering A (B, C ...) as approximation only;

(5) discovering and describing any (including unexpected) links between the respective attributes/features of A, B, C ..., as well as any coinherences (mutual pointers);

(6) exploring the extent to which the (relative) explanatory power of A (B, C ...) depends on the current strength of B (A, C ...), etc.;

(7) developing a complete synopsis or theory that explains all features of the explanandum under differing contextual conditions;

(8) explaining any shifts in the meaning of the concepts needed to explain the explanandum, A, B, C ..., and the new synopsis or theory.

Table 4.1 *Description of RCR levels.*

The characterisation of the developmental logic in terms of *intra-inter-trans* is taken from Piaget and Garcia (1983/1989). (Early level descriptions in Oser and Reich 1987, p. 182 – see note 3, p. 13 for change of name to RCR.)

Level	Description
I intra	A and B (and C...) are considered separately; only one of them is declared correct. The (implicitly) reigning concept is that A and B (and C...) are alternatives, not complementarist aspects. Usually single-track choice of A or B, (or C...), occasionally tentatively both (without offering a detailed justification), depending on chance knowledge or socialisation.
II inter	The possibility that A and B (and C...) might both (all) be right is considered. A may be right, B may be right, (C... may be right), both (all) may be right, possibly with rather different weighting factors.
III trans-intra	The necessity of explaining the given phenomenon with the help of A as well as by means of B (and C...) is affirmed globally. After examination, neither A nor B (nor C) is considered quite correct as individual explanations, both (all) are needed for a full explanation. The limits of formal binary logic begin to be overstepped (intuitively).
IV trans-inter	Conscious connecting of A and B (and C...), explicit evocation of their relationship. Affirmation that neither A alone explains the explanandum of itself nor B alone (nor C... alone). The relationship between A and B is analysed (e.g., 'B permits making use of A', 'B cannot exist without A', etc.). Any context dependency of the explanatory weight of A, B, (C...) is (dimly) perceived. The use of RCR logic is more frequent. Although the argumentation may have some arguments in common with those of level II and/or III, it is markedly more complex.
V trans-trans	Encompassing 'theory', or at least synopsis, featuring (reconstructed) parts of A, B, (C...) possibly supplemented by D, ..., the various relations and context dependencies being fully understood from a multi-perspective viewpoint. Use of RCR logic has become a routine.

APPENDIX B2

Table 1. Developmental logic of relational and contextual reasoning (RCR). The issue is to co-ordinate the competing descriptions, explanations, models, theories A, B, (C...), for instance God's transcendence (A) and God's immanence (B). At each level the co-ordination is qualitatively different.

Level of RCR	Core characteristic of level	Comment
I	A <i>or</i> B (<i>or</i> C)	only one competitor gets into view
II	A, but <i>also</i> B (C)	a second competitor is perceived
III	A <i>and</i> B (<i>and</i> C)	all are needed for a full understanding
IV	Logic of <i>and</i>	relationships and context in view
V	Synopsis/theory	all comes together, including extras

Table 1. Developmental Level of Responses to Situations Calling for Complementarity Reasoning to Deal with Noncompatible Explanations A and B

<i>Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Explanation A and explanation B are considered separately, spontaneous judgment "true" or "false" (emphasis on alternatives, not on complementarity). Usually single-track choice of A or B, occasionally of both without offering a detailed justification and depending on chance, knowledge, or socialization.
2	The possibility that A and B may both be right is considered. A may be right, B may be right, both may be right, possibly with very different weighting factors.
3	The necessity of an explanation with the help of A as well as of B is examined. Whereas neither A nor B is generally considered correct individually, both are needed (partially).
4	Conscious connecting of A and B, explicit indication of their relation. Neither A nor B is correct (alone). The relation between A and B is analyzed (for instance "B permits the use of A" or "B cannot exist without A"). The situation-specificity of the relative contribution of A and B to the total explanation is at least intimated.
5	Construction of a generalized overarching theory (or at least synopsis), including (reconstructed/supplemented parts of) A and B and possibly an additional C. The complex mutual relationship of A and B (and C) as well as the situation-specificity of their explanatory weight is understood and incorporated into the overarching theory. Any resulting shift of meaning in the terms used is explained.

APPENDIX C

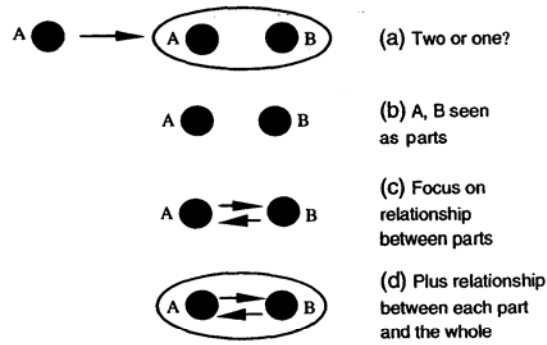


Figure 7.1 Complexification and conceptual changes when moving from one to two. (Source: Reich 1994a, p. 116)



Pastor General's Report

Limited-circulation Newspaper for the Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

December 17, 1991

Dear Ministers,

I am pleased to be able to include with this issue of the *PGR* the newly printed Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God! I hope you will take time to read it over and get familiar with it. It states in brief, easy-to-read language the fundamental teachings of the Church. It is designed to be brief and understandable, citing scriptural references from which each statement is drawn. It will give a good overview to anyone who wants to know what the main teachings of the Church are.

The Statement of Beliefs gives the official teaching of the Church on the subjects it contains. However, it is important to note that the Church must always be prepared to grow in understanding. As stated in the introduction, "Accordingly, the Statement of Beliefs does not constitute a closed creed. The Church constantly renews its commitment to truth and deeper understanding and responds to God's guidance in its beliefs and practices."

Therefore, as we look to God to guide us, if and when we discover that changes need to be made to our Statement, those changes will be made.

Let me make a few comments about one portion of the Statement. In the statement about God, you will notice that the final sentence reads: "The Church affirms the oneness of God and the full divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Someone may ask, "Does this mean we now accept the doctrine of the Trinity?" No, it does not. The doctrine of the Trinity in the Western Church attests the union of three Persons in one Godhead, so that the three are one God as to substance, but three Persons as to individualities. We do not accept that teaching; we believe that the word *Person* is inaccurate when referring to the Holy Spirit.

Someone may ask, "Why does the statement use the word *divinity* in reference to the Holy Spirit?" For these reasons: The Holy Spirit is not created. It is eternally of God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit cannot be less than divine. As you can see from the Statement about the Holy Spirit (on the same page), we speak of the Holy Spirit in terms of the "power" of God, but not as "only" or "merely" the power of God. We need to understand that the Holy Spirit is divine and eternal. The Holy Spirit cannot be separated from God.

This is why it is important that we state clearly that we affirm the "oneness of God and the full divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The issue is largely one of terminology, for many in the Church have not known the proper definition of "divine" as "of, or relating to, or proceeding

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from God." If some still have difficulty with the statement, they need to study carefully the pertinent scriptures (several are cited in the Statement).

Perhaps it would be helpful for me to explain here what was wrong with our article titled "Who Was Jesus' Father?" in the final issue of *The Good News* (November-December 1990), which was designed to refute the doctrine of the Trinity.

First, let me say that the author of the article was simply using our traditional terminology, understanding and reasoning. His explanations were no different from what has been generally taught in the Church. We should all realize that this is simply an area that had never been carefully studied. Let's now look at some of these traditional explanations.

We used the argument that if the Holy Spirit were a divine Person, then Jesus would have been the Son of the Holy Spirit, and not the Son of the Father (Luke 1:35). However, this argument showed that we did not understand the doctrine we were attempting to refute. The trinitarian concept of God does *not* teach that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *separate* beings.

The trinitarian teaching is that there is one and only one Being who is God, and this one Being is three divine Persons. To trinitarians these Persons are distinct, but they are nevertheless one Being. In other words, God is not just one, nor is God three, but God is three in one, and one in three. When one of the three acts, all act. To a trinitarian, the natural way God works is through the Holy Spirit. In other words, the trinitarian would not see the Holy Spirit as a separate entity from God the Father, as our argument assumed. Our argument would be valid only if the Trinity teaches three Gods, which it does not.

We also used an analogy of a printing press to explain God and the Holy Spirit. This is not an appropriate analogy. The printing press is totally separate from an author, a mere tool the author uses to get a job done. This analogy implies that the Holy Spirit is separate from God. If the Holy Spirit were separate from God, it would have to be one of God's creations — an idea that is biblically wrong.

We also used arguments derived from metaphors. We noted that the Holy Spirit can be quenched (I Thessalonians 5:19) and asked, "Can a person be quenched?" Yet, we omit references to God as "a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Therefore, our reasoning was inconsistent. The trinitarian would point out that if God can be referred to as a fire and still be a divine Person, then similar references to the Holy Spirit do not prove that it is not a divine Person.

When we attempt to point out the errors and inconsistencies in the teachings of others, we must at least understand what others are teaching to avoid exposing our own ignorance.

The Bible tells us there is one and only one God. Pagan ideas about multiple gods are condemned in the Bible. Yet, the Bible also tells us about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are one and are divine and eternal. The Bible does not fully explain how this can be so, but Scripture does call on us to believe it.

It is the teaching of the Church, based on the Holy Scriptures, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God in two divine Persons, and that the Holy Spirit is not a Person as is the Father, and the Son, but is the promised Comforter and the power through which God works in the Church. (We should also realize that even when speaking of the Father and the Son, the English word *Person* is at best only a weak metaphor. The word *Person* tends to make one think in terms of people, or human "persons." Even though we use the term, we must keep in mind that God is infinitely more than can be conveyed by the word *Person*.)

Here is the key: There are things that are simply beyond our limited, finite, human ability to grasp. We cannot truly understand, for example, how it can be that God has no beginning.

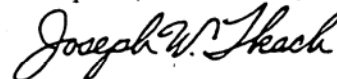
The Bible does not explain that, nor could we understand such a concept even if the Bible did explain it, because it is a spiritual reality on a level higher than we are capable of understanding. When we are granted immortality we will no doubt understand these spiritual complexities. Until then, we must simply take on faith what the Bible tells us to be true — that God has no beginning.

Likewise, the Bible tells us that there is one God. Yet the Bible also tells us of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our finite minds are unable to fully understand that. It is a *spiritual* reality, a *spiritual* truth, not a physical one. We do not have to accept ancient creeds that affirm one God in three divine Persons. But we do have to accept the *Bible*. Therefore, we have carefully chosen wording for our Statement of Beliefs that we believe is *consistent with the Bible*, but without going beyond the Bible by calling the Holy Spirit a Person. We accept what the Bible says about God on faith, even though we cannot in this life fully comprehend it.

It is important to realize, as I have explained before, that it is contrary to the Bible to think of God as other than one. The Father and the Son are not two Gods. They are *one* God. Likewise, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three Gods. They are one. But neither do we believe it is correct to say they are three Persons in one God. We affirm what the Bible reveals: the oneness of God and the divinity and unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

My deepest thanks again to all of you and your wives for your dedication to serving God's people. Remember to pray for one another, fellow ministers. In addition to the weighty responsibilities of shepherding those God has called, some are suffering severe personal trials. All our prayers and love are with the Frankels and the Wooldridges as Mrs. Frankel and Mrs. Wooldridge fight cancer. Our loving and merciful, all-powerful God is our ever-present strength in time of trouble. He will see us through all trials.

With deep love, in Jesus' name,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph W. Tkach". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed text "With deep love, in Jesus' name,".



Pastor General's Report

Limited-circulation Newspaper for the Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

August 18, 1992

Dear Ministers,

Our new booklet, *God Is...*, is being printed and will be available around the time of the Feast. I want to encourage you to read this booklet carefully. It is an inspiring, informative and thought-provoking explanation of what the Bible teaches about who God is and what he is doing, his infinite transcendence, his relationship with humanity and how he is revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It also explains the history and development of the doctrine of the Trinity and our position on that doctrine.

As I have written before, we do not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. However, as Christians, neither should we use erroneous arguments or unfounded conclusions when we speak of *anything*, including the doctrine of the Trinity. There are specific, biblical reasons that we hold the nontraditional position that we do. And we can better understand those reasons when we rightly understand the *facts* about the doctrine of the Trinity.

Human beings in general tend to be careless in their facts when they attack a point of view that disagrees with their own. That is natural, it seems. But when *we find ourselves* doing that, we should try, *because we are Christians*, to look honestly and objectively at the facts and be fair in our presentation of the other view. It is not necessary, nor is it right, to simply brand something with wicked-sounding names just because we do not agree with it.

We need to *know why* we disagree, and we need to be honest in our assessment. There is, of course, a time to brand something for what it is. But the key is to brand it *for what it is*, not for what it is *not*, nor for what we *think* it to be without a careful investigation of the facts.

The doctrine of the Trinity did not originate in paganism, as we have traditionally taught. The new booklet, *God Is...*, explains the background that led to the doctrine and shows how we differ from it and why we teach what we do. I hope every member will take the time to read all of it.

Let's remember in prayer our brothers and sisters in dangerous and distressing circumstances around the world. And as we pray earnestly, "thy kingdom come," let's live as faithful subjects of that kingdom by participating fully in the life of Jesus Christ in us through the Holy Spirit.

My prayers are with you every day, and I thank you for your prayers and kind words of encouragement for me. Income for the Church is about 4 percent under last year. This is a good figure, considering the recession, and we are grateful for it.

I look forward to speaking to as many of you as possible on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles!

With deep love, in Jesus' name,

Joseph W. Tkach

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Pastor General's Report

Limited-circulation Newspaper for the Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

August 10, 1993

Dear Ministers,

Last time, I wrote about the reasons the Church teaches that there is one God, who is revealed in the New Testament as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I explained that the Bible teaches that there are not three Gods or two Gods, but only one. I also explained that the Bible reveals that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are *distinct*, that is, they are not the same — but neither are they *separate* Beings.

In this letter, I want to focus on what the Bible reveals about the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is often misunderstood in one of two ways: 1) as a third, separate Being in the one Godhead, or 2) as an impersonal force or power that God uses to do his work.

Let's look closely at the first error. A popular misconception of the nature of God is to think of three God *Beings* in one Godhead, with the Holy Spirit as a third, separate Being. To us, such a concept, that the Holy Spirit is a third, separate Being, is, and has always been, entirely foreign to our thinking. The Bible teaches that there is *one* God, and any concept that makes the Holy Spirit a separate Being is not biblical.

Most people have only a hazy idea of what the Bible teaches about the oneness of God. Many do not really think about it. Some imagine three separate Beings. Some picture one Being with three heads. Others think of one Being who changes from Father to Son to Holy Spirit whenever he wills. It is easy to make such mistakes.

Many people use the word "Trinity" as a definition of the biblical teaching about God, but, if asked, would not be able to explain what the Bible actually teaches about *how* God is one. In other words, what many people envision when they speak of the Trinity is not really biblical. Much of the confusion lies in the use of the word "Persons."

The word "Persons," which is normally included in any English-language definition of the Trinity, causes people to think of three Beings. "One God who is three Persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," is a common way the Trinity is explained. But the ordinary meaning of the word "Person" is *misleading* when it is applied to God. It gives the impression that God has limits, and that his threeness lies in his being three separate individuals — which is not the case.

The English word "person" is derived from the Latin word *persona*. The word *persona* was used to describe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Latin language, but it did not convey the same meaning as the English word "person" conveys today. It was a word that was used for a role that an actor portrayed in a play. It was the word for "mask," because actors wore different masks for each character they portrayed. But even this concept, though it does not allow the error of three Beings, is still weak

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and misleading when referring to God. It is misleading because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not mere roles being played by God, and because an actor can play only one role at a time, quite unlike God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all the time. Even though a Latin theologian may have understood what he meant when he used a word like *persona*, the average person would hardly have been able to. Likewise, the English word "person" is easily misunderstood by the average person when referring to God, unless it is accompanied by an explanation that "Persons" in the Godhead should not be thought of in the same way as "persons" like you and me.

When most English-speaking people think of one God who is three "Persons," they cannot help but think of three separate divine Beings. In other words, the terms "persons" and "beings" are usually thought of, in English, as meaning the same thing. The Bible reveals that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the way the *one true God* of the Bible is, the way God exists always.

Throughout the centuries, many ideas have been developed that might seem, at first glance, to make these biblical facts easier to understand. But we must be careful not to accept any idea that denies what the Bible says. Some ideas might make things seem simple, in the sense of making God easier to comprehend and easier to picture in our minds. But we should all agree that what is important is whether an idea is consistent with the Bible, not whether it is simple or easy.

The Bible tells us there is one and only one God, and then presents us with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all eternal, and all doing things only God can do. If any human being set out to explain God from a purely logical standpoint, without the Bible, he would never come to the conclusion that the one God is, in some very real sense, also "three." The Bible leads us, by revelation, to a conclusion that we would never be able to reach on our own.

"One in three" — or "three in one" — is a concept that appears illogical to human reason. We naturally look for ways to make it simpler. The idea of one God Being *apart from* any thought of the existence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is simple to understand. In fact, the Muslims have such a concept.

The idea of one "God family" with more than one divine member of the family — that is also simple to understand. *But the God of the Bible is not what we would have expected if we had simply sat down, with no revelation, to figure it out for ourselves.*

The true God exists in a way that is beyond our finite understanding. He reveals many things about himself, and we believe them all, even though we cannot explain them all. For example, we cannot explain how God can be without beginning. Such a concept is beyond our finite understanding. We cannot explain it, yet we know it is true that God is without beginning. Likewise, the Bible reveals that God is one and only one, yet is also, at the same time, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe it *even though* it is not simple or easy to explain. We believe it *because the Bible reveals it.*

When we understand that God is one, and that the Holy Spirit is God, just as the Father is God, and the Son is God, we have no problem understanding a passage like Acts 13:2: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Luke records the Holy Spirit *saying*, "Set apart for *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work to which *I* have called them." Luke has no problem with the concept that the Holy Spirit said something, in the same sense that God says things, and he has no problem with the concept that *the Holy Spirit* called these apostles for their work.

When we take the biblical revelation of the nature of God for what it is, it is beautiful indeed. When the Holy Spirit speaks, or sends, or inspires, or leads, or sanctifies, or empowers, or gives gifts, it is *God* speaking, sending, inspiring, leading, sanctifying, empowering, and giving gifts. But since God is one, and not three separate beings, the Holy Spirit is not a separate God doing separate

things on its own. God has one will, the will of the Father, which is also the will of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is not a matter of two or three separate God Beings *deciding* to be in perfect agreement with each other. It is a matter of one God and one will. The Son is the very expression of the will of the Father. Similarly, the Holy Spirit constitutes the will of the Father at work in the world.

Paul says that "the Lord is the Spirit," and he speaks of "the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). He says "the Spirit gives life" (verse 6), something only God can do. We know the Father, only because the Spirit enables us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus dwells in us and the Father dwells in us, but that is only because the Spirit dwells in us (John 14:16, 23; Romans 8:9-11). If the Spirit is not God, then we could not say the Father and the Son are in us, because they are God. But the fact is, since God is one, if the Spirit is in us, then the Father and the Son are in us.

Paul equates the Spirit, the Lord, and God in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. He says it is "the same God who inspires" in verse 6, and he says "these are inspired by one and the same Spirit" in verse 11 [Revised Standard Version], and goes on to declare that the Spirit does all this as the Spirit *wills*. How can the Spirit will? The Spirit wills because the Spirit is God, and God is one, and the will of the Father is the will of the Son and of the Spirit.

The Spirit creates (Psalm 104:30). Only God can create. Our traditional concept of the Spirit as the power by which God creates is not wrong, but it falls short in providing the full picture.

Hebrews 9:14 says the Holy Spirit is eternal. That means the Holy Spirit is *uncreated*. Only God is uncreated.

Jesus told the apostles, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17). He specifically identified the Counselor as the Holy Spirit: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (verse 26).

The Counselor convicts the world of sin, something that can rightly be ascribed only to God. He guides into *all* truth, something only God is capable of doing. As Paul affirmed, "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:13).

We used to note that the Spirit is described in the Bible as being "poured out" — without noting also that the Bible uses figurative language throughout, in order to describe God's activity in terms we can understand. God is called a "consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). He can also appear as a literal fire, as when he appeared to Moses as a fire in a bush (Exodus 3:2). God is called Light (1 John 1:5). The Son of God is described as Light (John 1:9) and as Bread (John 6:33). We should also note that the Bible describes a soul as being "poured out" (1 Samuel 1:15).

To worship God is to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are the one and only one God. That does not mean we are to single out the Holy Spirit and worship the Holy Spirit as though the Holy Spirit is a separate Being. We do not direct worship to the Holy Spirit specifically, but to God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is God in us (the Holy Spirit) that causes us to worship God. The Comforter (like the Son) will not speak of himself (John 16:13), but what the Father gives him he will speak. He does not direct us to himself, but to the Father through the Son. Likewise, we don't pray specifically to the Spirit — it is the Spirit in us that moves us to pray, and, in fact, intercedes for us (Romans 8:26).

Unless God himself is in us, we would not be turned toward God at all. Unless God himself is

in us we would not know God, and we would not know his Son. That is why all the credit for our salvation goes to God and not to us. The fruit we bear is the fruit of the Spirit — that is, God's own fruit, not ours. But God gives us the privilege, if we will accept it, of participating with him in his work.

The Father is the Creator and Source of all things. The Son is the Redeemer and Savior, and the one by whom God created all things. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter and Advocate. The Holy Spirit is God in us, who leads us to the Father through the Son. Through the Son, we are cleansed and saved so that we can have fellowship with him and the Father. The Spirit stirs our hearts and minds and inclines us toward belief in Jesus Christ, who is the Way and the Door. The Spirit gives us gifts, the gifts of God, not the least of which are faith, hope, and love.

All this is the work of the one God, who reveals himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not a different God from the God of the Old Testament, but in the New Testament something more is revealed about him: He sent his Son as a human being to die for our sins and be raised to glory, and he sent us his Spirit — the Comforter — to dwell in us, to lead us into all truth, to give us gifts, and to conform us to the image of Christ.

When we pray, reaching God is the goal of the prayer, yet it is also God who leads us toward that goal, and it is also God who is the Way along which we are led toward the goal. In other words, it is to God (the Father) we pray; it is God in us (the Holy Spirit) motivating us to pray; and God is also the Way (the Son) along which we are being led toward that goal.

The Father initiates the plan of salvation. The Son embodies and executes the atoning, redemptive plan for the salvation of humanity. The Holy Spirit applies the benefits, or gifts, of redemption to empower the actual salvation of the faithful believers. All this is the work of the one God, the God of the Bible.

Again, I want to emphasize that we have always experienced and understood God *as he is revealed in the Bible*. We have always known that God is the Creator of all things, we have always known and believed that God sent his Son to die for our sins and be resurrected to glory so that we might live in him and he in us. We have always known that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, sanctifies us, and is conforming us to the image of Christ, and that our salvation will be fully revealed when Jesus returns to rule the nations. *In our practice and experience, nothing changes*. We pray as we always have, and we worship as we always have. But our explanation of how the Bible teaches that God is one has changed.

What we didn't previously understand was how to put our belief down on paper in such a way that it didn't lead to biblical and theological problems. Now God has led us to a better understanding. I pray that none will say that our former, simpler, explanation was better and that we should preserve what we were more comfortable with. God doesn't call us to comfort; he calls us to truth.

In this letter, I have explained why we teach that the Holy Spirit is God, rather than merely God's power, and why we do not think or teach that the Holy Spirit is a "third, separate Being" in the Godhead. I have also pointed out why the English word "Persons," when used of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is misleading. Next time, I plan to review the limitations of the word "Persons" and go into the English word we plan to use in our revised *Statement of Beliefs*.

In many ways, this kind of material is new ground for some, but it is important. One may feel it is unsettling — because it is different from what Mr. Armstrong taught. I understand that. However, as I have often explained, the important thing is that we carry on Mr. Armstrong's tradition, which is really God's tradition, *by letting the Bible be our guide*. Mr. Armstrong repeatedly stressed that a Christian is committed to accept God's truth and change when proven

wrong. That attitude must always be with us. When the Bible shows us we need to grow, let's get out of the way, and let God grant us growth! *We should be praying for that, and we should be responsive to it when God sends it.* It takes *courage* to follow God's lead, but the Holy Spirit gives us that courage!

With deep love, in Jesus' name,

Joseph W. Teach



Pastor General's Report

Limited-Circulation Newspaper for the Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

June 21, 1994

Dear Ministers,

In my last letter in the *PGR*, I pointed out that ministers cannot simply be silent about the Church's new doctrine on the nature of God. I explained that ministers should "show support for Christ's leadership of the Church." I reminded you that lack of support creates division, uncertainty and confusion among the members.

But the question arises: How can a pastor do this if he doesn't understand the doctrine? Are we asking him to preach something he doesn't believe? The fact is, there are ways to show your support and help your congregation maintain a spiritually healthy attitude even though you may not yet fully understand or agree with the new doctrine. In this letter, we'll look at how you can do that. (This letter will not appear in *The Worldwide News*.)

First, let's consider certain things that every minister should believe. All ministers believe, and are able to state with conviction, that we are in the Church of God, that Christ is the Head of the Church, and that Christ wants us to stay in the Church. All ministers are able to state with conviction that the Holy Spirit leads the Church.

When we state these kinds of things to our congregations, we show that we are not afraid of "what is happening" in the Church. Instead, we show that we have confidence in Christ's ability to lead those he has chosen. We show support not only for headquarters, but for Christ himself when we encourage people to have faith in him and in his leadership.

We honor Christ by honoring the humans he has sent to lead us. We do not talk behind our leaders' backs. We do not plant doubts about their wisdom or their administrative styles and policies. We avoid doing to them the things we wouldn't want others doing to us.

Also, all of us should be able to acknowledge that neither our human leaders nor our traditions are infallible. We should all agree that changes are sometimes necessary, and that the Holy Spirit does lead us and help us understand the Scriptures in a better way. Every minister knows that is true and should have no trouble expressing it.

On the doctrine of the nature of God, every minister agrees that God heard our prayers before the doctrinal change and that he hears our prayers now. He performed miracles in the lives of members before, and he does now. As I have explained numerous times, we have always *experienced* God in the right way. We worshiped the true God, acknowledged our true Savior, Redeemer and Lord, and were taught by the Spirit of truth. Even though our official terminology sounded ditheistic (believing in two Gods), we were really monotheistic (believing in one God), for we were worshiping the true God, who is one.

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When we think about the areas in which all ministers agree, we can begin to see that no minister has to remain silent simply because he does not understand the new doctrine.

Every minister agrees that the Bible says there is one God, and that we do not worship more than one God. Every minister agrees that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that he was God in the flesh.

We all agree with the Scriptures. Surely every minister agrees that the apostle Paul says that there is one God and that God is referred to with a singular pronoun. And certainly we all, as Paul did, worship Jesus Christ *and* God the Father, even though there is only one God. In other words, every minister believes the Son of God is God, and every minister believes the Father is God, and yet every minister agrees with Paul that there is only one God. Therefore, we all can see that the Bible presents us with a plurality within a unity and that the Bible does not solve that paradox for us in any particular passage.

How can one God and one Lord add up to one God? This is the crux of the question, as every minister surely agrees.

Mr. Armstrong attempted to explain this paradox in terms of plural members of one *family*. This terminology, however, led to the unbiblical concept of God beings (more than one) and contradicts verses such as Isaiah 45:5. And yet, other passages, such as John 17, seem to describe the Father and Son as *two personalities*. The question is, therefore, how unity and plurality can be simultaneous.

In addition, the question must be expanded to include the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can be called *either* the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God, indicating again that Christ and God are one. Also, every minister agrees that if the Spirit does something or says something, that *God* is doing it or saying it. Likewise, every minister agrees that if the Spirit dwells or lives in us, then *God* lives in us. From this, we should be able to agree that the Holy Spirit is, in some way, God.

We can all see that the Holy Spirit is one of the ways in which God lives. The Son is one of the ways in which God lives. (These facts would be true even if you think of "God" as indicating a family.) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ways in which God exists — "permanent ways or modes of being" — as we have expressed it. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three ways or modes of being of the one God.

This is a position required by Scripture. I think every minister would agree that Scripture doesn't really explain *how* this is so — it simply presents God in this way.

As beings who are limited in time and space, we cannot expect to understand all the thoughts or the modes of existence of the God who created time and space and "inhabits eternity," and does not share, except voluntarily through the incarnation, our limitations. There is bound to be, from our limited perspective, some mystery involved — certain aspects about it we cannot totally comprehend. For example, we can understand that God has no beginning, but we do not understand how such a thing can be so. Similarly, we can understand that God is one being with three ways of being, but we do not comprehend *how* that can be so.

There is much that you can agree with even if you don't understand all the doctrine. By publicly affirming your agreement with these concepts you *do* understand, you show support for Christ's leadership of the Church.

If you don't understand all the details, you can publicly admit it. You can say something like: "I don't understand all the details of the Church's new teaching. I will try to answer your questions as best I understand, but I will have to refer some of your questions to Pasadena. I am confident that Christ is in charge of the Church, and I have faith that the Holy Spirit leads me and the entire Church into truth."

You might add something like: "I am studying this subject, but it's taking some time for me to

understand it. As with almost any subject, some of you may understand it better than I do. We each grow at different speeds in different areas. I encourage you to study it, and I hope that we all try to understand it with an open mind."

This answer is honest and supportive. You should find as much common ground as you can, and acknowledge that common ground. You should express humility in your understanding and a desire to learn more about the divine unity and plurality revealed in the Scriptures. You should point members to headquarters and to the human leadership Christ has chosen to administer his Church.

The majority of our pastors have been able to support the doctrine in more substantial ways, such as in sermons directly focused on this subject or focused on relevant passages of Scripture. But if you are not yet able to do this, I have given you some ways in which you need not remain silent — you can verbally support Christ's leadership of the Church.

I know every minister deeply loves the Church and the people of God and desires only to help and strengthen the brethren. But sometimes, we need to think about the effect our actions, or our inaction, can have on the brethren.

I know that some who left argue that I'm the real cause of division, because of the doctrinal change itself. But I know every minister agrees that God delegates authority as it pleases him, and he set me in this position. I did not claim it for myself. As I've said before, it would have been much simpler and certainly far less traumatic to take the way of least resistance. But I am convinced that God led me to make this change, and I would be fighting God to ignore that. Our doctrine is thoroughly biblical, as most of our ministers understand. But for those who have not yet come to see that, I hope we can all see that there is still the responsibility to strengthen and encourage the brethren rather than allow them to be scattered by our silence.

Let's grow together. Let's "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace," as we're told in Ephesians 4:13. It is vital for unity and spiritual growth that ministers openly show their support for headquarters, and this is especially critical during times of doctrinal or administrative change. There are positive ways every minister can do that, even though he may not yet have reached a full or clear understanding himself. But to remain silent is, in reality, to trumpet your disagreement and consequently to foster division.

I love you and pray for you every day, as I know you do for me.

With much love, in Jesus' name,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph W. Tkach". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

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22 December 2003.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD: A STUDY OF ITS TRANSFORMATION IN TERMS OF HELMUT REICH'S THEORY OF RELATIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL REASONING

This study is under the mentorship of Dr John McKenna, and has been given the green light by Dr Joseph Tkach and Dr Mike Feazell at church headquarters. This can be confirmed with Dr McKenna – john.mckenna@wcg.org

You have been selected on account of your leadership position in the church, as leaders are the focus of this study. Your participation would be helpful for understanding the church's transformation and would be much appreciated. Although many aspects of the topic are well-known to you, the purpose of this study is to consider the transformation in terms of a theory of the psychology of religion.

The study involves a consideration of the type (form) of thinking that contributed to and ensued from the church's acceptance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and its purpose is to identify the type of reasoning that is involved, in relation to various theories of cognitive development. The study is a positive appraisal of thought forms involved in religious change, and respects spiritual, theological and ecclesiastical dimensions of conversion. Rather than being an approach that examines the personal psychological characteristics of people responsible for change, this approach involves a study of how people think, not what they think about or why. Therefore, there should be no concern about any personal psychological appraisal.

I am a lecturer in psychology undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree at the University of Western Sydney, under the supervision of Professor Jim McKnight and Dr Maureen Miner, both knowledgeable in the psychology of religion and its relationship to scientific thought. I have the support of Professor Helmut Reich of Switzerland, who is the originator of the theory being assessed. Dr Reich is an eminent nuclear physicist, and thinker in religion, science and psychology. His "Developing the Horizons of the Mind" (Cambridge University Press, 2002) has been reviewed by me at www.amazon.com

Your participation in this study requires two Stages, and a consent form for each stage is annexed. Stage 1 involves completion of some sample questions followed by a questionnaire. The purpose of this is to consider the form of reasoning that you might take on various complex topics, then to consider how such a form of reasoning has been applied to some aspects of the Trinity.

Reich's theory draws from physics and philosophy, as well as psychology, so it will be necessary for me to consider the feasibility of applying the theory to a case study such as the WCG. Your answers will form the basis for understanding the theory's usefulness for explaining, for example, the cognitive aspects of religious conversion. Of course, any such explanation is not intended to replace valid spiritual insights.

Stage 2 involves probing further into the thinking process, based on the results of Stage 1. This will require a personal interview with you in Pasadena, California, possibly in April 2004. Again, the interview questions (which will be formulated after Stage 1 responses have been analysed) will focus on how you think about the Trinity, and its relationship to changes in thinking about other doctrines. It is granted that there are multiple reasons for changing beliefs, but this study is limited to assessing Reich's cognitive explanations as – to some extent – they involve Trinitarian thinking. This makes the theory fit well with a pivotal change in the WCG.

The potential benefits of this study include a better understanding and appreciation of the change in thinking that characterized the WCG's transformation, both by the denomination and observers. There may be benefits in terms of theological and member development, apologetics and mission objectives, as Reich's theories have been extensively focused on religious education. In the wider context, the WCG's transformation could be even more instructive to other churches undergoing change.

Participation should not take much of your time. Stage 1 involves short answers, and "top of the head" responses are actually preferred as this study seeks to consider your own thinking, not that of set answers. Depending on how much thought you want to put into your answers, Stage 1 could take less than 1 hour to complete.

Likewise, Stage 2 personal interviews should take less than 1 hour. These interviews can be done in your office at WCG corporate headquarters in Pasadena, possibly in April 2004. If this is unfeasible, a relatively short telephone interview could be conducted at a time to suit yourself. An interview in London, England, on my way to Switzerland might also be possible. If conditions make travel unsafe at that time, Stage 2 might have to be conducted electronically or by telephone contact.

As a denominational leader, it is assumed that you would have had closer involvement with the formulation and transmission of the new beliefs. It would be an advantage to have every leader's participation, to give a cross-section of thinking styles and opinion.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may elect not to respond to this questionnaire, and may withdraw consent at any time. If you experience distress or have concerns in relation to the study, please contact me by email at j.buchner@uws.edu.au or by writing to the address on this sheet.

As the Stage 1 questionnaire is conducted by email, your emailed response will identify you, which is important for progression to Stage 2. You will be able to retain your original message electronically. However, you have the option to post your response to me anonymously and not proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 personal interviews may be tape-recorded and transcribed, if you consent to this. You will be provided a copy of the tape and transcript. Otherwise I will have to rely on my memory to recover the type of reasoning used in our discussion.

The consent sheets make provision for the kind of confidentiality you require. Unless you otherwise consent, your responses will not be identified – hard copies will have a code number and be stored without other identifying details in locked confidential storage at the university and will be destroyed after the mandatory 5 years. The electronic version will be deleted.

Analysis of Stage 1 responses needs to be completed in January 2004, so your response would be appreciated by **31 December 2003** and no later than 11 January 2004 please.

If you require further information before responding, please contact me by email on j.buchner@uws.edu.au. Dr McKenna also would be able to explain the benefits this study will bring to the Worldwide Church of God.

I wish you and your family a blessed Christmas and a happy new year.

Yours sincerely,



John Buchner.

School of Psychology
University of Western Sydney
Australia

j.buchner@uws.edu.au

Home phone: 61 2 4655 2975

PS – Only the consent forms and instruments need to be returned by email; the Participant Information Sheet does not, to reduce bytes in transmission.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [Protocol No. HEC 03/226]. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (at the above address or by telephoning 61 2 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome. Thank you.

CONSENT FORM – STAGE 1

I agree to take part in the research study “**THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD: A STUDY OF ITS TRANSFORMATION IN TERMS OF HELMUT REICH’S THEORY OF RELATIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL REASONING**”

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand what is requested. I also understand that I can withdraw at any time up to the submission of the doctorate for examination.

If you submit an anonymous response by post, it cannot be withdrawn unless you identify yourself as its author.

Please indicate to which of the following you wish to give consent (type “Yes” or “No” in the preferred brackets).

[] As a voluntary participant in this study I am willing to be identified in the thesis as the author of the statements provided by myself, provided they are fairly and truthfully attributed.

[] I wish to remain anonymous and unidentified in the thesis and any subsequent publication unless I am asked for and give my consent at a later date.

Your name: _____

Position in the WCG: _____

Address: c/- WCG, Box 111 Pasadena CA 91123 U.S.A.

Preferred email address if other than the one used to contact you: _____

Date of consent: _____

This form can be returned by email together with your response. It does not have to be returned if you choose not to participate in this study, or if you wish to post me your responses as an Anonymous participant. My address is:

John Buchner,
UWS School of Psychology,
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith South DC NSW 1797
Australia

My email address is - j.buchner@uws.edu.au

My home telephone (from the USA) is – 61 2 4655 2975.

CONSENT FORM – STAGE 2

I agree to take part in the research study “**THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD: A STUDY OF ITS TRANSFORMATION IN TERMS OF HELMUT REICH’S THEORY OF RELATIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL REASONING**”

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand what is requested. I also understand that I can withdraw at any time up to the submission of the doctorate for examination.

Stage 2 involves a personal interview in Pasadena, California, possibly in April 2004. Naturally, if you chose not to participate in Stage 1, this form need not be returned.

However, I would appreciate your expression of consent, as follows (type “Yes” or “No” in the preferred brackets).

- [] I am willing to be interviewed as a follow-up to Stage 1 and await contact regarding meeting arrangements.

- [] I am willing to have the interview tape-recorded and transcribed, and understand that a copy of the tape and transcript will be provided to me.

- [] As a voluntary participant in this study I am willing to be identified in the thesis as the author of the statements provided by myself, provided they are fairly and truthfully attributed.

- [] I wish to remain anonymous and unidentified in the thesis and any subsequent publication unless I am asked for and give my consent at a later date.

Your name: _____

Position in the WCG: _____

Address: c/- WCG, Box 111 Pasadena CA 91123 U.S.A.

Preferred email address if other than the one used to contact you: _____

Date of consent: _____

This form can be returned by email together with your response. It does not have to be returned if you choose not to participate in this study.

John Buchner,
UWS School of Psychology

My email address is - j.buchner@uws.edu.au

My home telephone (from the USA) is – 61 2 4655 2975.

**THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD:
A STUDY OF ITS TRANSFORMATION
IN TERMS OF HELMUT REICH’S THEORY OF
RELATIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL REASONING**

STAGE 1 Please return by email before 11 January 2004.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to these questions, so far as this study goes. Your natural form of reasoning will be considered by me in accordance with the theoretical approach used in this study.

The most important requirement is that your response be your own considered opinion, and not taken from any publication or discussed with another person.

Part A is intended to identify a Reasoning Approach. That will help me to appraise the application of your thinking in Part B. This study actually is a contribution to understanding this approach to analysing reasoning, and the development of a valid scoring manual.

Please type your answers in the spaces provided. The spaces will adjust to the length of your response, which could be from 100-200 words for each question. There is no minimum or maximum number of words, however.

PART A - PRELIMINARY EXERCISE

Please consider the following cases and, in your own words, write a paragraph giving your own thoughts on each one without consulting any literature on the topic.

Please do this first, without thinking about any of the questions in Part B, even though you might have peeked at them.

The space between questions is arbitrary; the length can be adjusted as this is an electronic questionnaire.

Case 1

Science has discovered that mankind evolved from lower forms, whereas the Bible gives an account of a special creation. How can these different versions agree?

Your response:

Case 2

Fires caused devastation and loss of life in California in recent months. Preventative burning may have destroyed rare flora and fauna, and spoiled the scenery. What can you say about this?

Your response:

Case 3

Christian theology teaches the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. In your view, how can One God be Three?

Your response:

PART B - QUESTIONNAIRE

In your own words, and without referring to other sources, please provide a paragraph on the following questions. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers.

Try not to repeat verbatim your response to Case 3, above.

Write your responses in the space between the questions – 100 to 200 words for each response is adequate but there is no absolute word-length.

1. What is your understanding of the Trinity?
2. What led your thinking towards accepting the Trinity?
3. Did you understand the Trinity before believing in it? Or did you understand the Trinity after believing in it?
4. What kind of thinking followed your acceptance of the Trinity?

5. How did your acceptance of the Trinity influence your thinking about other doctrines and practices of the WCG?
6. Did the WCG's acceptance of the Trinity lead to changes in other WCG beliefs? In what way do you think this happened?
7. Is there anything about the Trinity that isn't understood by you, or in your view isn't understandable?
8. In your view, To what extent do you think other members of the WCG understand the Trinity? (refer to clergy and laity separately if you wish).
9. In your view, why did so many ministers and members find it difficult to accept the WCG's adoption of the Trinity?
10. In your view, to what extent can the transformation of the WCG be attributed to its understanding of the Trinity?
11. In your view, is the Trinity logical? How could the logic of the Trinity be explained?
12. Do you have any other comments on the role of the Trinity in the WCG's transformation?

13. Supplementary question: If you wish to provide a comment on this research, please feel free to do so.

Your name: _____ Date: _____

THANK YOU very much for your participation in this study. If you have consented to a personal interview, I will be in touch with you in February 2004.

Please email your response to j.buchner@uws.edu.au or post it to John Buchner, UWS School of Psychology, L'Bag 1797, Penrith South DC NSW 1797, Australia.