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The Struggle for the
One True God
Against Binitarianism
OR
The Multiple Gods of Monotheism

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I



CHRISTIANITY is said to be one of the three great monotheistic religions or theological systems of the world. Of the Big-Three, there is Judaism, whose God is Yahweh; there is Islam, whose god is the Moon god, which god came directly from a leadership position in a Persian pantheon of gods; and there is Christianity, whose God has three somewhat distinct heads and one indistinct body, but whose supporters nonetheless, claim it represents monotheism. They are serious. And they are wrong.

The foundation of today's orthodox trinitarian Christian religion, notably represented by Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, is said to be a direct representation of the apostolic era and of course, what the apostles taught. However, this claim to apostolic authority is a false claim.

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"Monotheism," as you no doubt know, is considered to be the worship and support on one solitary God. Roman Catholic and Protestant orthodox trinitarian theologians, in their dominion over the faithful, do not hesitate to declare their three-person worship model to be "monotheistic." Presumably, the trinitarian could add as many persons or heads onto his one god as he wishes, as long as he does not violate the one-body rule. In fact, considering the long list of Roman Catholic saints that have been elevated to divine status, they might already have tacked more heads onto the one Roman god than the law allows.

"Historic Binitarianism" was a kind of interim worship model that existed prior to the advent and ultimate forcible institution of the Roman Church Trinity. Today, according to Christian orthodoxy, trinitarianism is compulsory.

Binitarianism, as an elusive interim model, existed primarily during the first several hundred years of Christian history and, like all the worship models of the time, including any view of trinitarianism, it was an unsettled affair. As the name implies, "binitarianism" is properly the worship and support of two equal Gods. It might be termed "Ditheism." By contrast, "Tritheism" is the worship and support of three individual gods, while "Dualism" is generally the belief in two opposing gods or forces, one being good and the other being evil. Dualism opposes "Monism" and explains the universe as the outcome of two eternally opposed and coexisting principles, conceived as good and evil, light and darkness, or some other form of conflicting powers. "Monism" ("oneism") defines theological occurrences, as in the creation of all living things, in single terms. "Monism" opposes Duality and Plurality.

"Wherever pluralistic philosophy distinguishes a multiplicity of things, Monism denies that the manifoldness is real, and holds that the apparently many are phases, or phenomena, of a one. Wherever dualistic philosophy distinguishes between body and soul, matter and spirit, object and subject, matter and force, the system which denies such a distinction, reduces one term of the antithesis to the other, or merges both in a higher unity, is called Monism" (Catholic Encyclopedia).

"Polytheism" is the polar opposite of Monotheism. "Monotheism" is the worship and support of one individual God while polytheism is the worship and support of two or more gods. Obviously, binitarianism and all other forms of multiple-god worship fall into the category of polytheism. Some worship models, like "Docetism," may be considered monistic, or even monotheistic, since the model holds that Christ only "appeared" to be a man, but was not. But like most forms of theism or God-worship, Docetism was a mixed-up affair with some denying the reality of Christ's human nature only, while others denied his birth and death. Some believers held that Christ only had one nature while Roman Church orthodoxy insists that he had two natures, one divine and the other human.

"Modalism" or "Monarchianism" held that God the Father and the Son were but one person, thus the distinctions in the Trinity are but "modes" or "energies," not "persons." In the Roman West, people who accepted this view were

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called "Patripassianists" (reference to the Father), whereas in Constantinople and the East, they were usually called "Sabellians."

"Monothelism" became popular in the 7th century, and held that Christ had only one will and one nature. "Monophysitism" held that Christ was one person, had one *hypostasis* and one nature. "Nestorians" believed that Christ was one person, had two *hypostases* and two natures. "Hypostasis" literally means "that which lies beneath as basis or foundation." It came to be used by Greek philosophers to distinguish reality from appearance. "The distinction in fact in Christ was brought about gradually in the course of the controversies to which the Christological heresies gave rise, and was definitively established by the Council of Chalcedon (451), which declared that in Christ the two natures, each retaining its own properties, are united in one subsistence and one person."

They go on to say that these distinct natures are not joined morally, accidentally, nor commingled in Christ.

Eventually, the Roman Catholic Church anathematized everybody but trinitarians in their attempt to put all their enemies out of business.

The bottom line is that in the early church era, even as we see it today, there was a mishmash of differing opinions and belief systems, all vying for recognition and power. In the end, what we know now as orthodoxy, the trinitarian position, won out. How many of the religious models being offered in those early that were truly monotheistic is anyone's guess.

Before I came to understand religious matters to any great degree, I was never a serious part of the orthodox worship system. I was out of the loop, being too interested in personal matters. After all, I was a young man.

II

In the middle of the 1960's I heard the very persuasive voice of who I believe to be Garner Ted Armstrong (GTA) on the radio. As I recall, he was broadcasting on behalf of his father, Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) and the then Radio Church of God. A number of years of listening and study passed before I became intimately involved with the church organization. The founder of that church, which was later renamed the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), was Herbert W. Armstrong. Both of the Armstrongs have since died. The elder Armstrong died in January, 1986 and the younger Garner Ted, died September, 2003. In June 1978, Garner Ted left his father's church and created an organization of his own that he called the Church of God, International (CGI). Some years later, the original sabbatarian WCG imploded and exploded to the extent that it is now no longer a functional sabbatarian church. The leaders of the old WCG helped morph that church into a Sunday observing trinitarian organization. This radical change happened after the elder Armstrong died in January, 1986.

In 1978, I left the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) myself and eventually made my way over to Garner Ted's church, where I spent some years speaking, ministering, and supporting his organization. In 1994 a personally offensive incident occurred by direct actions of certain persons in the ministry of that church

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(not by Garner Ted). As a result, my wife and I left and went independent. We have been independent ever since. And I stand here before you today, no worse for the wear.

I was ordained a minister of Christ in April of 1995 by the pastor of the Congregation of God Seventh Day.

III

I like to consider myself a biblical researcher. I research and analyze biblical concepts, both historical and modern, and try to boil down what I have found for possible publication in our free quarterly newsletter, *The Fellowship Commentator*. In my research, I examine many religious beliefs and concepts, some more stupid than others. However, I am happy to report that some concepts are brilliant. I am, in a sense, a religious archeologist mining gems from the dust of the ages and from the free marketplace of ideas. In my digging, I have discovered to my sorrow that the simplicity of the gospel message of the Bible has been lost in Christendom, and it was lost a long time ago. The early Roman church deliberately complicated the gospel and deliberately withheld the scriptures from public scrutiny. And this was done for personal gain and in light of their agenda. They did it for money, position, safety, and power. The common people had no access to the scriptures and consequently had to depend upon their priests and leaders for all interpretations. The ordinary believer knew no better. But things have changed and we are without excuse today with regard to the scriptures. As might be expected, a good part of my research involves Herbert Armstrong, his church, and his legacy of doctrinal traditions.



Rather than return to the faith delivered to the apostles and saints of the early first century, the great 16th century Reformation went about half way back, I would guess, if that much. Many years later, Herbert W. Armstrong recognized a problem with orthodoxy but rather than going back to those early apostles as he declared he was doing, he set *himself* up as an apostle of Christ and further complicated an already complicated gospel message. Armstrong created a wildly complex theory of the nature of God, even anointing himself as *the* "end time" apostle of Jesus Christ. (He was also purported to be the end-time Elijah.) As a result, the simplicity of Christ was lost on his followers.

Armstrong: "And as His [Christ's] chosen apostle, I say to you in the authority of Jesus Christ, the political state cannot take over... The Supreme Authority [Christ] says you cannot shut the doors He has opened before me!" (*Wall Street Journal letter 9/02/80*). Adopting Matt.24:14 as the *commission* to the Church: "This is the message the Eternal God is delivering now, by His end-time apostle, to the heads of governments in world capitals all over the world" (1978, *The Incredible Human Potential*).

The message HWA delivered abroad was that "a strong hand from someplace" would intervene in world affairs. He somehow managed to neglect to mention God in his travels.

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Armstrong: "And finally, Christ's apostle sends out monthly a mimeographed Co-Worker letter to all members and co-workers reporting on progress in the work, current activities and needs" (1985, *Mystery of the Ages*).

Herbert Armstrong did not deny the Roman Church assertion that Jesus was God but merely split the Roman Church God into two individuals and dismissed the holy spirit as a divine god. In so doing, he postulated that the Father and the Son comprised a "family" of divine Gods. He further emphasized that those persons who joined him in his (now defunct) sabbatarian Worldwide Church of God could qualify to become Divine Gods themselves. These future Human-Gods would ascend to their thrones (under Armstrong) when Christ returned to earth (which, by the way, was "soon" to happen many years ago, but did not). They, in concert with the Messiah, would take over the entire world, destroy all evil nations in the process and would force "peace" on earth and good will towards one another, severely punishing those who did not toe the line.

These Superman-like Divine Gods would become absolute rulers with absolute power of life and death over whatever humanity might be left on the earth. HWA (and his ministerial team) claimed that they, as super-human Gods, would rule cities, build nations, and teach all people the Armstrong message. These super-human hero Gods are to be Co-Rulers, Saviors, and Creators with Jesus Christ. (Binitarians hasten to add, of course, that as Gods, they would be lower in rank than Jesus. They would be "lesser" Gods.) According to Armstrong theology, these newly created hero Gods are to go forth and create other universes and worlds and populate them. They would even become Christ-like saviors of these new worlds. These newly created super-human Gods are to have power, prestige, and position in the life hereafter—in *The Wonderful World Tomorrow*. Humans left over from the "War of Armageddon" would answer to them on pain of death or plague. Peace would be forced upon all the nations and they or their representatives would be forced to come up to Jerusalem each year to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (presumably where Herbert Armstrong would be seated on his throne alongside the recently-crowned King, Yahshua ha Massiach, Jesus the Messiah).

Armstrong and his selected ministerial team promised his followers that they would become world ruling Gods and all people (such as those hated Protestants) would answer to them as to Gods. The Armstrong church organization (and no other) was the Kingdom of God in "embryo," they said, and it was to become the ruling Government of God. It was the headquarters for a relatively few chosen elite and unique persons who were to become Gods as God is God.

Of course, most of Armstrong's congregation would be lesser Gods than Herbert Armstrong (who would be just under Jesus in authority). His hierarchical team of preachers and others would be Gods with a certain amount of power nonetheless. Nothing was ever said, to my knowledge, that Armstrong was gathering "doorkeeper" or "garbage-man" Gods, but only Gods that would rule with a rod of iron over cities and nations of human beings. HWA spun a glorious and rosy picture for his loyal triple-tithe-paying supporters. He ultimately offered

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an essentially unlimited power trip to essentially powerless individuals—individuals that could easily see many serious problems with our society and the world but being generally without power and influence, could do nothing about it. It was a heady proposition and a lot of people invested themselves financially into the picture—they *literally* bought into Armstrong's golden dream. I was one of them. I bought a chunk of that dream, but it tarnished over the years, and instead of just polishing it over and over, I set it aside and let it deteriorate. The relatively few persons remaining as zealous Armstrong disciples today have a vested interest in maintaining this rosy doctrinal scenario—the status quo. They bought into it and they do not want to lose their opportunity for "Godhead" status or their investment of time, money, and friends. They desperately want to see this picture come to pass because for many years they depended on HWA to lead them into *The Wonderful World Tomorrow*. He validated their presence in his church and their future as ruling Gods and dominant sovereigns. It is *this* prize, this reward for lifelong faithfulness they cling to and it is *this* prize they desperately do not want to lose, although they may not admit it.

IV

The struggle for general recognition of the One God of biblical monotheism is a great one today, given that the predominant view in virtually all of Christianity the world over is one of trinitarianism. And trinitarians give no quarter on the issue of the nature of God. It is their way or the highway—they have no use, generally speaking, for the one-God position or the One-God advocate, since they think they destroyed this "heresy" about 1500 years ago.

The struggle we face takes perseverance and dedication. Halfway measures will not get you very far in this endeavor. In the early days of the Christian Church struggle, those who championed the cause of trinitarian orthodoxy in its drive for status and power subdued virtually all disparate factions of the emerging first-century Christian community. We must all stand on behalf of the biblical singular Eternal God in our own spheres of influence and do what we are able to do to further his view.

My personal struggle for Yahweh, the One God of biblical monotheism over against binitarianism did not begin as a struggle against trinitarianism. I had known for many years that trinitarianism was a fallacy of the greatest sort, so ridding my thoughts of an independent holy spirit who moved about the earth as a God was no problem. Some of you may be fighting that battle as we speak and my prayers are with you and for your eventual victory over orthodoxy. My struggle since about 1995 or so has been an open struggle with various facets of Armstrongism and with the specific two-Gods-Plus doctrine called "binitarianism." Herbert Armstrong taught, and most of the WCG splinter churches continue to teach, that God is a family of Divine Beings. They teach that God is an assembly of Gods and that the members of the WCG splits may themselves become Divine Gods just as much as God himself is a God. I hasten to add that this "binitarianism" of which I speak is not the historic model mentioned a moment ago. This

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distinctive binitarianism comes under the umbrella of "Armstrongism," the religious methodology posed by Herbert Armstrong and supported today by his followers around the world. Latter-day "binitarianism" is a byproduct of the Armstrong Sabbatarian Worldwide Church of God. In fact, it represents the heart of that worship model. Further, without their distinctive multiple-gods theology, the core of which is that members of their sect can become "Gods," they would have no claim to fame. Some in the Armstrong camp, which now comprises several hundred splinter groups from the old Sabbatarian WCG, call their distinctive system or model, "The Armstrong Movement." I call it "Armstrong Polytheism" or "Poly-binitarianism," which describes their worship model as a cross between binitarianism and polytheism.

Here is a typical scenario from the poly-binitarian camp. They insist that God is one. But on the other hand they say that God is a family. I have a problem with that. Now, you might say that John Brown here is a family man. And John Brown has ten children in his family. But the composition of John Brown himself does not change no matter how many children he has. I mean, he going to get old in a hurry, but other than that, he is still John Brown.

They say, Oh No! You have it all wrong. John Brown is a type of being. He is a human being. Because he is a human being, he is part of the human race, and since the human race is made up of individuals, you could call the human race a family of human beings. OK, I say. Well, that means that John Brown is a family. Isn't that simple?

But wait, I say. Let's talk about God. The "Shema" (Deut.6:4) states that God is one. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one." That's right, he says. God is one God. But God is composed of many individuals in the "God Family." Don't you see? God is a family. And since God is a family, he can be composed of many individuals. God is one, alright, just like the Shema says. The Lord is one. God is one, but composed of many. This is plural monotheism.

He says, let's take your family. I say, stay away from my family! He says, No, I mean, let's think about your family. Your name is Haney, right? Hmmm. And there are children in the Haney family, right? Yes, but we call it the Haney gang. OK. And that gang is one family, right? Yes. Well, there you have it. There I have what??? Well, Haney is a family name, so Haney is a family. But wait, I say. Only my last name is Haney. I am an individual called F. Paul who happens to be in the Haney family. He says that's right. But Haney is a family called the Haney Family. It is one, just like God is one as in the God Family. Don't you see? I didn't see it. On the contrary, "God" is not a family name but the title of one individual called "Yahweh."

Begging the Question is one kind of faulty logic that Armstrong binitarians utilize. In this style of faulty reasoning, the truth of the conclusion is assumed in the premises. They are "assuming what has yet to be proved." The first thing they do in begging the question is to redefine the terms.

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The first term is "God is one" and the operative word within the term is "God." But, they say, since the Hebrew word "elohim" is plural, and elohim is the word underlying the English word "God," then God becomes plural. So, now the first term becomes, "God is many."

We know the Bible clearly states that God or Yahweh has a son named Jesus or Yahshua. And we also know that believers are called children of God. There could be millions of believers who are God's children. We know that this kind of an arrangement is called a "family." There is a father and children. The church is supposed to be the mother, or the bride. So there you have it, we have discovered a family structure in the Bible. But, whereas the Bible depicts God as *having* a family, binitarian folks deny that God HAS a family and say rather that he IS a family. This is a slight but significant distinction.

With a slight twist to the left, they go on. Since the "God family" (family of God depicts ownership, which they deny) is a biblical entity (they say), and since God is now plural (they say), and since God can be found to be speaking to another God (they say) in the Old Testament (**Gen.1:26: Let us make man after our image**), then God is a family called the "God family." And since believers may become part of God's family, they are also God. Thus man can become Gods just like God in a family called God.

What's wrong with this picture?!

Binitarian theology absolutely depends on the restructuring of God. It absolutely depends upon the redefinition of God away from his singular personage. And their ultimate desire and need is for themselves to become Gods in a pantheon of Gods with all the attendant power of God over people. This, I think, is what drives them. An intellectual discourse over the nature of God does not have them troubled. What troubles them is the fear of a great loss. If God is one single being, then they cannot and will not become Gods at all.

Make no mistake! The ultimate goal of the Armstrong binitarian polytheistic theology is for them to become world- and universe-ruling Gods.

MAN WILL BECOME GODS!

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote: 'Man has the potentiality of becoming GOD! ... By the very fact that God, through man, is reproducing Himself, we know MAN, when his spiritual creation is completed, shall actually become GOD!' (The Good News, 9/79, article, "Your Children—FUTURE GODS?" p.4). "WHY did the Creator God put MAN on the earth? For God's ultimate supreme purpose of reproducing himself—of recreating himself, as it were ... ultimately [resulting in] in millions unnumbered... children who shall become God beings, members of the God family. ... The sole value of human life lies in ... the potential of being... born of very GOD, a child in the God Family" (*Mystery of the Ages*, 1st ed. 1985, pp.102-103, 111). "God is reproducing Himself! ... Anyone who joins the 'church of his choice' has not come into God's true Church [=WCG].... The very first portion of God's spiritual harvest of humans... made God Beings—is the Church! ... But we shall also be, as priests, co-saviors with him in saving the world... The Kingdom of God will be the God Family—a superbly and highly

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trained and organized family of GOD BEINGS" (ibid., pp.226, 229, 240, 270).

"Man was created to literally become God" (*Tomorrow's World*, Robert C. Kuhn, May/1971).

Garner Ted Armstrong: "WE are to someday be ABOVE the angels, ABOVE the cherubim, the seraphim, and ABOVE the 24 elders seated about God's very throne! WE ARE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY OF GOD, TO BECOME GOD!" (*Good News*, 12/57). "You are offered a sonship in the Kingdom of God to teach other people how to become God!" (*Good News*, April/1961, David Jon Hill). According to Armstrong camp Church doctrine, certain "binitarian" humans are to become world-ruling Gods, Creators, Co-Saviors, and *nothing* less!

This is what Armstrong binitarianism is all about: World-ruling God status.

The binitarian fear of the loss of God-Being status showed itself in an ugly confrontation one year while I was preaching at a Feast of Tabernacles meeting. The subjects of my two sermons at that site were complimentary. One considered the greatness of God, or Yahweh, and the other considered the greatness of Jesus Christ, who some refer to as Yahshua.

To make a long story short, the first sermon was going along pretty well until I suggested that Yahweh was supreme and above all. I must have also suggested that the Messiah was not supreme, and insofar as the idea of humans becoming Gods, I probably said they were not going to become Gods. Certain persons in the audience did not want to hear this kind of stuff. Their feathers got ruffled. They wanted to argue with on the spot about it and they did, but I held my ground and remained cool and collected. In any case, my wife and I met with these folks after the service, and soon found out that they were a couple of old-WCG preachers (and some of their friends) who believed they themselves were going to become Gods just as God is God. They were going to rule the earth. They were going to have the power to create human beings and destroy them, if they wished. They were going to have the power to resurrect people from the dead. They were going to create and populate other planets in the same way that the earth was populated, beginning with Adam and Eve. They were going to be saviors and they were going to create utopian worlds all around the universe. They told us about some guy who was being listened to in the Detroit, Michigan area and creating havoc among their congregations. In fact, one group, they said, actually broke away from them as a result of this person and his damnable heresies. That person was Anthony Buzzard and I think, along with his friend, Charles Hunting. I wish I could have recorded that conversation.

At this point, I was more determined than ever to present God as the Supreme Almighty God and have been doing so ever since.

Christ Fellowship Ministries, which I represent, has been in the business of waging a theological war with Armstrongism, especially targeting their brand of polytheism, for quite some time now. We have engaged them at different levels and have not been vanquished. But we are only two people in our ministry, and I do most of the talking and writing. I engage the binitarian faction primarily through *The Fellowship Commentator*, our free quarterly newsletter that is sent

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first-class to anyone who requests it. I also make presentations to groups like this one, urging them to awaken and see the truth of the nature of God. We also produce a number of booklets having to do with a whole host of biblical topics. I have brought some samples of my writings to this meeting. More examples of some of these can be found on our website, CFMinistries.org.

As in every war, there are going to be casualties. Truth and honesty are usually the first casualties of any given conflict. In the conflict over the nature of God issue, truth and honesty have been destroyed by many from the Armstrong binitarian camp. Emotionalism and fear dominate conflicts, especially religious ones. One of the early casualties of this war, on my part, was free fellowship and personal contact with people who I have known and fellowshiped with for many years. Committed friendships suddenly become not-so-committed and evaporate when certain theological doctrines are on the line. Open and congenial discussions of various points of view came to a screeching halt. But, I also discovered who my real friends were in all this. Unfortunately, most of them were not in the church I was attending. As long as I kept my mouth shut about whom I thought God really was fellowship went along smoothly. We could talk about jobs and the weather without too much trouble. But I was unable to be totally silent. As a consequence, some of these doors of fellowship slammed shut in our faces. However, God is still in charge.

Yahweh closes doors and Yahweh opens them. Upon closure of that Armstrong church door, Yahweh God opened another door to preaching and fellowship. Then recently, God opened yet another door to a much greater ministry. I am eternally thankful that Yahweh has seen fit to consider me one of his servants and hope I can always be worthy in his eyes to glorify him and represent him in some small meaningful way.

— *F. Paul Haney*

