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## In the Beginning!

*by Robert Ardis*

**“Let there be Light!”** That command was spoken by God, the Word, who later became *flesh and dwelt among us*. That was Jesus Christ who created ALL things to fulfill the will and pleasure of God Almighty (see Jn. 1:1-3 and 14 and Eph. 3:9)!

He said; **“Let there be light—and there was light!”** Genesis 1:1-2 is a thumb-nail description of;

- 1) The original creation and
- 2) A re-creation at a much later date.

**“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”**

### The Gap Theory!

Those of us of the former Worldwide Church of God (WCG) under Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong’s leadership were taught that vast eons of time could have occurred between verses 1 and 2. This indeterminable amount of time is known as “the gap theory” and first appeared in the old Schofield Reference Bible! This theory explains that the earth and the heavens had been created in absolute beauty and perfection in the beginning! So wonderful was this physical creation that the angels of God shouted for joy (Job 38:1-7).

However, at some point in time Lucifer, the great arch-angel, became dissatisfied with his role of ruler of one third of the angels and his assigned position over Planet Earth. In his overwhelming vanity he wanted God’s position as God of the Universe! Therefore through many years of spreading *seeds of discord* and discontent among the angels under his authority, he amassed an angelic army and swept up to heaven to attack the very Throne of God Almighty! But he was cast back to the earth by the awesome power of God and the righteous angels.

Jesus Christ, many years later stated in Luke 10:18: “... **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from**

**heaven.”** Lucifer, the Light Bringer, had become Satan, the Adversary and his sinful rebellion caused destruction to the beautiful earth and many parts of the solar system. The asteroid belt between Earth and Mars indicates the power and violence of the battle between God’s forces and Satan’s army. The earth became as described in verse 2 of Gen. one—**“And the earth was (#1961 became) without form (#8414) and (#922) void.”**

### The Evolutionist!

How long the earth lay in this state, we do not know. The world of science; especially geology, with their sophisticated dating systems estimates that the earth, the solar system, and the universe are approximately 4.5 billion years old! Most of these brilliant scientists have devoted their lives to their studies trying to understand how life and all things came to be on Planet Earth. And in their studies some have concluded that given enough time and the right circumstances life could develop from the non-living! Many of these researchers believe in the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution—which leaves the Eternal God completely out of the picture.

### The Young Earth and the Creationists

However, in recent years research by other very intelligent theologians and scientists, known as “Creationists” with religious backgrounds, sought to prove the existence of God and the authenticity of the Bible and to disprove the godless theory of evolution. In their research they claim that the earth is only slightly more than 6000 years old! Their arguments and conclusions are very interesting as they attempt to de-bunk the long accepted theories by those who believe in the earth’s vast ages. And they attempt to

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# WE DON'T HAVE IT ALL!

## Truth vs. Speculation

by Daniel Frendo

“Lately, we’ve often heard Mr. Ardis using and emphasizing the phrase, *CGF doctrine*. Whilst a *Philadelphia* Christian will of course understand that mere speculation is not new truth and hence cannot be part of *God’s doctrine*, he also understands that **whatever knowledge emanates from God’s Word IS indeed new truth**. NEW TRUTH is that which is supported by GOD’S SURE WORD. That’s how we will know that *Jesus Christ* is the *Source* of any new truth” – excerpt from “A *Philadelphia* Christian”, *Philadelphia Witness*, August 2009, page 3.

Since 1997, Jesus Christ has given Pastor General Robert Ardis an abundance of new truth, as well as much enhanced understanding concerning already established truth.

Mr. Ardis has of course also speculated. Over the past twelve years, we have seen that some of those speculations have not withstood the test of time and these have thus been corrected accordingly. We should not be at all surprised if our Chief Shepherd was to eventually also correct some of the other speculations that we may still hold close to our hearts, which may also currently be classed as *CGF doctrine*. Correction by Jesus Christ should always be a cause of great rejoicing, as this will always lead to further growth in His knowledge (II Pet. 3:18)!

Let’s look at three examples of **truth vs. speculation**:

**Truth** – The First Resurrection occurs on the Day of Pentecost (see *Set Apart by Truth*, pages 112 – 116)

**Speculation** – The First Resurrection may occur on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012

**Truth** – “Day of the Lord” and “Day of the Lord’s Wrath” are not the same (see *The Day of the Lord*, pages 55 – 57, first 10 points).

**Speculation** – The Day of the Lord began on the Feast of Trumpets evening of October 1, 1997.

**Truth** – All Seven Seals are opened in the Day of the Lord (see *Rev. 1:10*).

**Speculation** – Christ has already opened the First Four Seals, releasing the Four Horsemen.

Over the past three years, I have personally counselled several prospective CGF members; some of them have shied away from taking the decisive step to again be part of the Body of Christ because we may have given *the mistaken impression that speculation must be accepted as Church doctrine*.

Throughout these past 1978 years, the Church of God has constantly repeated this error.

During the Philadelphia era, for example, WCG Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong had strongly speculated about an incorrect 1972 – 1975 Timeline. To his credit, however, Mr. Armstrong had this *immediately* corrected even well before Passover 1972, *as soon as he realised* that his speculation was incorrect. In his wisdom and in humility, he emphatically stated that **“that it is utterly unsafe to try to SET DATES in regard to future prophesied events... we are only human, and it is natural that we should have been curious to know, as far as possible, how much time we had to GET THE JOB DONE”** – *Personal, Good News of Tomorrow’s World*, February 1972.

God has since shown us that there had then been other inaccuracies that were based on pure speculation, which Christ has corrected and clarified through Mr. Ardis during this final Laodicean era.

When we fail to recognise speculation for what it is, there will be the danger of not being able to recognise error and thus becoming “blind” to the necessity of correcting it. This may well lead us to believe that we are “rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17). This tends to shut up the mind to accepting further new truth from Jesus Christ, which is tantamount to believing that we have it all!

Erroneous speculation has proven to be a *stumbling block* to others; hopefully we can repent of this. Ministers and members alike must refrain from unnecessary speculation that pride may later prevent us from correcting. God usually clarifies matters when He deems that the time to understand is right. In the meantime, we must clearly acknowledge *in no uncertain terms* that when something cannot be supported by scripture, it will then be speculation.

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use the Bible to substantiate their beliefs.

In the 1970's *The World Tomorrow* telecast produced several well-documented telecasts featuring Garner Ted Armstrong on the subject of disproving the evolutionary theory which were well received by an interested viewing audience. Fully illustrated booklets and brochures were offered to the public and might be still available today.

The purpose of this article is in no way an attempt to prove or disprove either argument—I am not qualified to dispute either theory or the technical research that has taken years to develop by their proponents. Yet I can safely take a position anywhere within the huge amounts of time the geo-chronologist expound and the very brief period of time “the young earth” people attempt to expand on. And all glory goes to God the Creator.

### **There is a Way that Seems Right...!**

Thus as we read and are greatly impressed with the tremendous research that has gone into these opposing theories, we must realize that these brilliant minds on both sides of the question do not understand the Plan of God or Bible prophecy! The proponents of the 4.5 billion year age of the heavens and the earth do not always agree among themselves and do not believe the Bible's account of creation. On the other side the doctors of theology, doctors of divinity, religious scholars and teachers, mostly have a Protestant or Catholic background and are very sincere in their pursuits but are lacking in understanding of the Plan of God.

As we get deeper into this article you will see that these religious leaders use the commandment regarding the Sabbath to substantiate their point of the earth being only 6000 years old—but they do not observe the Sabbath—they keep Sunday. They refer to the Holy Days but have no knowledge of their great meaning. And these very educated religious scholars continually mention the “gospel” yet have no idea of the TRUE GOSPEL. They teach a “gospel” about Christ and the “fall of man”, but do not teach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus Himself brought to this world. And most Catholics and Protestants teach that God's Law has been “done away”. Psa. 111:10 tells us: **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth forever.”**

Thus these men, the intelligentsia of academia, with an abundance of sophisticated technical resources at their disposal for their research, still cannot know

God's Plan because they do not keep His Commandments.

Again, I repeat, these are brilliant minds on either side of this argument, but they have not been called of God nor given His Holy Spirit. They have devoted their lives in researching their particular interest involving time—but have no idea that we are nearly 12 years into the Day of the Lord.

Christ states in Matt. 24:15: **“Whoso reads...let him understand”!** And he means understanding the prophecies and numbered days of Daniel and Revelation. But this is revealed knowledge (the knowledge of Jesus Christ) that is given only to the TRUE CHURCH by the grace of God (II Pet. 3:18). Therefore, these “wise of the world” cannot understand!

I Cor.1:26-28 is very clear in regards to their inability to understand: **“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are.”**

Paul warns Timothy of these same types of individuals in I Tim. 6:20-21: **“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.**

### **Remember the Sabbath Day...**

Let's briefly examine the scriptures the “Young Earth” scholars use in their argument against the “gap theory”.

Ex. 20:8-11: **“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.”**

Verse 11 is their main point: **“For in six days the LORD made (#6213)heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”**

Ex. 31:13-17 repeats this and also refers to the annual Sabbaths (see v. 13).

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Verse 17 states: **“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made (#6213) heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.**

Now come back to Gen. 1:1: **“In the beginning God created (#1254) the heaven and the earth.”** The heaven(s) and the earth had been created in such splendor and beauty that the angels shouted for joy. The “Young Earth” proponents claim this is what is being done in the first two verses. God is CREATING! And they teach He did this in six literal 24-hour days a little over 6000 years ago.

Verse 2 states: **“And the earth was without form (#8414), and void (# 922); and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”** They teach that the words rendered **“without form and void”** means the earth was “unformed and unfilled” and God was in the process of forming it and filling it. However, the Bible in Isa. 45:18 states it this way: **“For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain (#8414; it was not created unformed), he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.”** God did not Create it this way—it became that way at the rebellion of Satan and remained in that condition for an indeterminate time.

Where else would you place Isa. 14:12-17 and Ezek. 28:12-19 that describes Satan’s evil plan to take God’s position as ruler of the Universe? These scriptures also make known the ultimate fate of that evil creature! Request our booklet *The Deep Things of God!*

### *Tohu and Bohu*

Jeremiah 4: uses the words #8414 and #922 written together to show that these words have a much more dreadful meaning than just to say “unformed and unfilled”. To claim this is the complete meaning of these words, to me, is not allowing the Word of God to interpret their meaning or explaining Satan’s part in the destruction of the original earth and much of our solar system. Jeremiah’s prophetic description of the earth during the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord’s Wrath shows us how the perfect earth in Gen. 1:2 became at Satan’s rebellion and how the earth will appear in the soon coming holocaust of the great Tribulation!

**“How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet (the Trumpet**

Plagues)? For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth (#776), and, lo, it was without form (#8414 *tohu*), and void (#922 *bohu*); and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land (#776) shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

**For this shall the earth (#776) mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.”**  
See also Isa. 13 and 24:19-21 and 34:4.

### “Created” or “Made”

The re-creation of the earth begins in verse 3 of Gen 1 with the command, **“Let there be Light, and there was light.** Verse 2 declares that **“...darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”** This is an interesting statement in that the earth was covered with water—not ice as it would have been if the sun had not already been created! Notice verse 14-19 and that which was done on the 4<sup>th</sup> day—God made the sun, moon and stars and apparently “set them” to be in the positions as they are today—not only for heat and light by day, but soft light by night—and for God’s Calendar. They had been created in the beginning, but were set for “signs and seasons and days and years” on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of re-creation.

Notice also the uses of “created” and “made” in Gen.1 and 2. There is a definite difference! The word CREATE has to do with the original creation and with the creation of new types of creatures. See verse 21 where new sea creatures are mentioned and verse 27 where man is created. Gen. 2:3 plainly shows that God created things in the beginning and at the re-creation He also created and made certain things: **“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”**

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### The 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> Month

We of the CGF understand that the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the re-creation occurred on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month on the Holy Calendar. That day was on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, thus the 7<sup>th</sup> day was the Sabbath—and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, the Feast of Trumpets. The Jews still observe this date as the beginning—the New Year!

God was beginning to build his Spiritual Temple at that time. The Word who would come as the Lamb of God was in effect slain from the “foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) as He created Adam. And God’s Plan to create more God-Beings in His family was initiated.

Observe that in Haggai 1:14-15 the emphasis is upon the date the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month as work began again on the physical Temple of God:

**And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.**

We observe this day today as a day of fasting and thanksgiving that we too can be a vital part of the re-building of the Spiritual Temple! We are qualifying for the Pillars of the Temple (Rev.3:12) and are prepared to assist the “lively stones” that Christ will send to us when it is time for them to awaken.

### Sin Entered into the World!

Other scriptures that the “Young Earth” proponents use in an attempt to prove their case is really very shallow and I will not take much space to explain their error.

They use Rom. 5:12 that states: “**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.**”

They theorize that nothing could die before Adam sinned, no animals or anything. They teach that death came because Adam sinned and brought death and the curse upon the earth. All earth was cursed and subject to death because Adam sinned they say—but that is such shallow thinking. Adam wasn’t the first to sin—Satan was! If they do not want to believe in Satan’s rebellion and the destruction of the earth that brought

on the period of “great dying” that the evolutionist describe; they still must admit that Satan deceived Eve and LIED to her before Adam ate of the forbidden fruit. Satan disputed God’s warning to Eve and told her “**You shall not surely die**”! That SIN occurred before Adam sinned. Satan had surely watched as God re-created the earth and created Adam and Eve—and he planned an evil scheme (sin) to cause Adam to disobey God.

Jesus told the Jews during His earthly ministry: “**Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**”

Therefore sin was in the earth before Adam sinned.

When Adam sinned he introduced spiritual death to the WORLD (#2889 *kosmos*; orderly arrangement, the inhabitants of the *world*). In Matt. 4:8: Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all **the kingdoms of the WORLD** (#2889)—**civilization!**

Consequently God thrust Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and cursed the ground as a punishment for Adam’s sin, but it had nothing to do physically with the creatures of the earth dying. Dying is a natural process of physical life!

Adam’s sin brought on him the spiritual death penalty; the second death (Rev. 20:14-15)! The wages of sin is death—eternal death by the lake of fire unless the sin is forgiven through the Second Adam—Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (I Cor. 15:21-22).

Satan has deceived the entire world. And man in his deception has created all kinds of theories in an attempt to understand the world we live in and how all things have come about. Proverbs 14:12 issues this factual statement: “**There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death**”. The ways of the Evolutionist seems right to their scientific mind. The ways of the Creationist seems right to these scholarly religionist—but Satan has deceived the whole world.

God has called us—the weak and base of the world and REVEALED his truth to us. Instead of bogging down in the arguments and theories of these very intelligent opposing groups, we must strive to “grow up into Christ Jesus in ALL things”. And soon we will be able to ask Him personally exactly how all of this actually came about. Won’t that be exciting and interesting—then later we can teach these brilliant scientist and scholars, during the Last Great Day, the plain truth about Creation and Re-creation and the wonderful Plan of God. Won’t that be wonderful!

## The Unpardonable Sin

by Frank Borg

One of the most destructive and terrifying thoughts that can enter a Christians mind is that he or she is cut off from God. Sin, of course, separates an individual from God. Isaiah 59:2 further tells us God hides from us to the point where He will not even hear us if sin is prevalent in our lives. Repentance on the part of the sinning individual must be forthcoming for God to forgive. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4), but once repented of God will forgive us (Jn. 24:47; Ex. 34:7; Ps. 86:5 etc).

However, there is *one* type of sin that, if committed, can cut us off from God FOREVER! If committed, this sin called the unpardonable sin, would result in God not hearing our voice again in prayer, no matter how much sweat and tears we may shed. Most will of course know what this sin is, some might not, but it's good that we review this topic from time to time because a lack of true understanding of this sin can be very destructive to a person's eternal life. Satan doesn't want us to understand this so that he can use our ignorance on this sin as a destructive weapon against us!

### Unpardonable Sin

What is the unpardonable sin? In Mark 3:28, Christ states: "Verily I say unto you, ALL sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: *but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.*" Christ states that those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit will NOT be forgiven. If we blaspheme the Holy Spirit, that sin will never be forgiven and as a result we will be in danger of eternal damnation – so says Mark 3:28. All other sins, when repented of, can be forgiven – but NOT blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Again, what is this unpardonable sin? How does one commit it?

When a person *wilfully* sins, his or her intention is to go against God. When someone premeditates performing a sin and knowingly goes against God, is in grave danger of committing the unpardonable sin. Essentially, this is what it means to blaspheme to Holy Spirit.

Following are a few extracts taken from an article entitled "The fear of the unpardonable sin" which originally appeared in the August 1959, Good News magazine:

"The sacrifice that was originally made for sins was the life of Christ given for us (Rom. 5:10). And, if we sin wilfully, deliberately, ON PURPOSE, realizing in our minds we are knowingly committing the very sins that put Jesus Christ on the cross, we are CONSENTING to His crucifixion -- in full knowledge He is the Son of David -- the Son of God. We are guilty as were those very Pharisees who accused and crucified Him. When we wilfully sin we are putting our Savior to open shame – in other words we are BLASPHEMING the Holy Spirit that is in Him"

As is clearly outlined in this quote, the 'unpardonable sin' goes hand in hand with sinning wilfully.

### WILLFUL Sinning

When one receives the Holy Spirit by God's grace, that spirit is 'provisionally' or 'conditionally' dwelling within the individual. If that individual changes his life's goal, and takes his eyes completely off the goal of God's Kingdom and purposely fixes him or herself on going back to the ways of the world, then he or she has set their mind to deliberately go back to sin! Whenever sin is premeditated, it is wilful and deliberate.

"IF a man decides he no longer WANTS to go GOD'S WAY, deliberately and intentionally changes his OVERALL ATTITUDE, and desires, and CHOOSES the world and its ways -- deliberately chooses a life of rebellion, comes to have contempt and disregard for God's Law, then that man either has done or is in danger of blaspheming God's Holy Spirit which a merciful and loving God had GIVEN by grace! SUCH A MAN is surely in grave DANGER of BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT!" (ibid).

Of course, it is not the intention of these quotes to be discouraging. On the contrary, these quotes, based on scripture, should be extremely encouraging and help act as a reminder and precaution for the future! We all stumble on the way as we go about doing God's will, and God has promised to forgive those sins as we can see from the above listed scriptures. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is not talking about isolated sins that are repented of. It is talking about wilful, premeditated, predetermined sin!

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Sometimes, we might stumble over an INCIDENT of sin. Sometimes it might take us a while to overcome a particular problem and we can find ourselves stumbling over the same sin time and again, but if we have the right attitude –that of having a desire to succeed along His way - if our desires are to overcome, grow spiritually and have eternal life, then of course God will grant us repentance. Our attitude has to be one of obedience, submission and wanting to do the right before God.

My point here is that there is a difference between an incident of a sin (stumbling because of a problem we are trying to overcome) and someone's wrong attitude of wilfully sinning and going against God.

“He who changes that overall ATTITUDE from one of submissive yielding to God to one of hostile rebellion -- the one who changes his life's call from wanting God's RIGHTEOUSNESS, and ETERNAL LIFE, to wanting SELF-centeredness and wilfully going the WORLD'S WAY, is in an altogether different category than the one whose call is the Kingdom of God, but who stumbles in an incident of sin -- or even many such incidents” (ibid).

What this is basically telling us is that if we deliberately sin we stand the risk of quenching God's Holy Spirit and once that spirit is completely quenched, we are guilty of committing the unpardonable sin. When one quenches God's Holy Spirit he or she ends up in a state of not caring about God and/or His Law. We need to be very careful of quenching the Holy Spirit given freely at baptism.

One area we must be especially careful about is in the choices that we make. We are constantly making choices and decisions. Most of our choices are deliberate, so we need to be careful of these choices. One brief example could simply take the form of allowing resentment in our heart toward some person who may have wronged us. Allowing resentment could embitter a person, sometimes to the point where it could change his or her whole life course by turning away from God. Many question the decisions or actions taken by a minister and get so frustrated that their actions take them away from the goal of the Kingdom. We have seen this take place over and over in the history of the Church. God warns us, "Follow PEACE with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12:14-15). Bitterness may not harm the

other person -- but it will certainly destroy US if we allow ourselves to get into that state! And that would be by our own deliberate choice!

Another way that a converted Christian can lose the presence of God's Spirit is by CONTINUED NEGLECT. “Neglect of prayer, neglect of Bible study, neglect of spiritual fellowship with God's people. Or, by continuing too close a friendship with unconverted people -- letting participation with them in material interests, pleasures, sports, entertainments, cause NEGLECT of spiritual interests. Don't misunderstand. A certain amount of diversion can be healthy. And you cannot avoid all contact with unconverted people. But never let it DOMINATE in your interest and heart” (ibid).

Colossians 3:1-2 clearly tells us: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on the things on the earth". We should be seeking more knowledge and understanding of God and His ways. THAT should be our main interest! The 'occasional diversion' should never compete with God as our overall interest and goal. If it does, God can quickly take second, third or worse place in our lives. (Singles who are of age to date should be extremely careful of dating those outside the Church. I have known many who have dated outside the Church only to allow that situation to suck them right out of God's Church because of investing time on a relationship that is entirely outside the scope of God's purpose (Amos 2:2). SPIRITUAL things should be our dominant interest – we have to set our affection on things above (Col. 3:2).

Hebrews 6:4-6 states: “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame”. Those who have fallen away from the truth of God are on dangerous ground.

Those who have committed the **unpardonable** sin have no Redeemer! They have crucified their Redeemer and Savior, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit by which they HAD access to God. When a Christian sins, he realizes it. He sees himself in utter misery and sorrow. Someone that has committed the unpardonable sin can NEVER feel this way. Those that have committed the unpardonable sin cannot

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repent because they feel that they have nothing for which to repent.

We must be very careful to not quench the Holy Spirit. Our closeness to GOD, our spiritual growth and development, and keeping the Holy Spirit of God thriving within us depends on this.

## **A Root of Bitterness**

*by John Durrad*

Heroin is one of the most powerfully addictive opiates known to man! Once hooked, it is extremely difficult to break the addiction. The typical heroin addict becomes a human derelict. He lives from “fix” to “fix”. His whole life becomes totally preoccupied with heroin. He rapidly finds he is an abject slave to the drug.

It becomes his God! Worthwhile character traits gradually begin to disappear. In time, boils and abscesses start to break out on the skin. Imaginary fears blight the mind. Sometimes insanity occurs, or death from an overdose. Once a person becomes addicted, there is very little chance that he will ever permanently escape.

Being hooked on hard drugs is anything but glamorous. One adult described heroin addiction this way: “It is like being possessed by the devil... You have no freedom. You can’t go anywhere or do anything. You can’t have relationships. Everything is just about getting the heroin. It’s a horrible way to live.”

One young addict in recovery warned how easy it was to get hooked. He said, “The first time I tried it was at a party, when I was 17...This kid passed a little bit out. I sniffed it. We were playing cards and the next thing I knew was... I feel good!” After that he said he became an addict, a dropout and a convict, prey to an obsession that has been ruining lives since the drug was developed around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The heroin addict literally goes through a “hell on earth” to free himself from the clutches of the drug. The experience of withdrawal is absolute torment. Severe stomach pains, violent vomiting, shattered nerves. Here is how one man described his fight with addiction: “...Well, you start to scream. The nightmares, all kinds of horrors; you are always thinking that there are monkeys jumping up and down your back. You turn around and see there is nobody there; and you find yourself on the floor many times from falling off the bed. At this point I was ready for suicide.”

Yet after enduring this sheer torture, about 95% of addicts turn right back to heroin! That shows just how tenacious the grip of heroin is.

***Please send your Article contributions via e-mail as a Word doc. attachment to:***

*dfrendo@setapartbytruth.org*

***You may also send them by mail to:***

*Daniel Frendo,  
Church of God’s Faithful,  
PO Box 28, St. Julians STJ 1000, Malta, Europe.*

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However, bad as heroin addiction is, there is a spiritual addiction which is even worse. There is a spiritual narcotic which can begin to dominate your life even more than heroin addiction. There is a spiritual addiction which also enslaves, captivates and leads to total character destruction. The spiritual addicts love for God vanishes. His love for God's people also goes, and his love for God's law changes into hate and hostility! The recovery rate of those who become enslaved to spiritual heroin is likewise virtually zero, and once hooked, a person's chances are slim indeed.

What is this spiritual narcotic – this mind twisting spiritual drug? How do people become addicted to it? How can you avoid it? These are important questions to members of God's Church.

Heroin comes from the opium poppy. The opium is refined into pure heroin, usually smuggled from one country to another. It finally reaches the customers (addicts) through "pushers"

Spiritual heroin also has its source of supply, and its legion of pushers. Satan the devil is the source and power of this spiritual poison, he is the one who refines it, boils it down into powerful doses, and then injects it into your mind. He doesn't take a hypodermic needle to inject it into a vein; he puts it right where it will do the most damage – into your mind!

Satan is also a master pusher. His tactics are subtle, seductive, and ever so sly. If you allow him to begin to inject just a little spiritual heroin into your system, at first it will seem to give you a small sense of pleasure. It may give you a fleeting thrill, but soon you will be hooked. Your system will demand more and more. You will crave it even where there is no more pleasure or thrill involved, and once you are hooked, your chances of escape are almost nil. Your reasoning will become warped and twisted.

But just what is this spiritual drug? This sinister, dangerous drug is A ROOT OF BITTERNESS. Notice what the Apostle Paul was inspired to write;

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" Heb 12:14-15

The Greek word for "bitterness" here is "Pikria" which means acrid; especially poison (Strong's 4088) This

bitterness is like something very caustic to the taste. It is a poison! Notice what the Apostle Peter said about Simon Magus.

"For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the hand of iniquity." Acts 8:23

What was wrong with Simon? Why did Peter say this to him? "Gall" also means bile or poison. Simon was into witchcraft, magic; he made his money from sorcery. Peter said his heart was wrong with God. He was wicked; he was in the bond of iniquity. This had put in him a bitterness against the truth and all good things. As far as we know Simon Magus never repented. Despite this admonition from Peter, he apparently remained in a state of bitterness toward the truth.

"Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Acts 8:24

He begged of them to pray for him, but his concern was more for the judgements he had made himself liable to rather than getting his heart right with God by deep repentance.

Paul knew the dangers of bitterness.

"And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" Eph 4:30-31

Satan is, without doubt, the most bitter being in existence today. He is bitter against God and all He stands for. (James 3:14-15) Satan is the author of bitterness. He was the first to allow a root of bitterness to spring up in his mind. When someone becomes bitter they are allowing the worst drug pusher of all time to peddle his wares to them.

How does one become addicted to bitterness: It is essentially the same way many have become addicted to heroin. Evidence shows that the vast majority of heroin addicts actually began by using other drugs. Using weaker drugs such as Marijuana or Cannabis leads to the hard addictive drugs such as heroin. A woman who was a heroin addict for 25 years said, "I don't think marijuana leads to heroin and cocaine, I know it..." She continued, "I know a thousand junkies, and they all started with pot (Marijuana) just like me",

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This is close to what the bible teaches when it exclaims, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." So it is with spiritual heroin:-bitterness. Generally a person starts out by harbouring just a little resentment in his heart, not really bitterness. He allows a little jealousy, a little envy, a little spirit of dissatisfaction to dwell in his mind. It is comparable to a weaker drug such as cannabis. He allows this weaker spiritual drug to sway his mind. He contemplates on negative thoughts. Gradually his mind becomes filled with such thoughts. Each thought leads to becoming a little more resentful, more unhappy, more hostile and bitter. Finally he becomes hooked on the hard stuff – the heroin of acute bitterness!

God's Church has been under attack recently by individuals who do not correctly use the government of God. Their quest for what they believe is the truth may be legitimate, but they must patiently wait for any new truth or changes to come from Jesus Christ down through the government of God. It is very easy to become bitter if things don't proceed as you might have wanted.

What is a root of bitterness? Bitterness is a caustic – a poison! A root is to establish something firmly! A root of bitterness is when bitterness takes hold!

As we have seen from Simon Magus it is extremely difficult to shake off. It begins in the mind. All problems need to be dealt with immediately – before they become rooted.

An example is when Aaron and Miriam were upset that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. (Num 12:1-2, 5-10) They had been dwelling on this and murmuring to each other about it. God was displeased because they were challenging the authority of Moses. God dealt with them and Moses intervened on their behalf, but it was a hard lesson to learn about harbouring wrong thought about a leader.

Another example where wrong thoughts were entertained is the story of Korah (Num 16:1-5, 31-33). Here Korah and his followers died as a result of their actions. In both of these cases problems began in their minds. They allowed these thoughts to fester and grow into major problems. They challenged God's chosen leader, and the results were devastating! If we even feel like challenging God's leader lets us be sure we are in the right attitude, that we have all the facts, and that we have not allowed bitterness of some perceived decision or injustice to take root.

Bitterness can come from many forms. They are all works of the flesh; envy, strife, hatred, disagreement, jealousy, rebellion. If these are allowed to take hold they become rooted! They become a root of bitterness!

That is how the process goes. First your feelings are hurt. Then without resolving the problem in the right way you begin to brood. Then you begin to doubt. Then your next thought could be, how can this be the Church? You may then begin to find all sorts of perceived faults, and it is easy as your reasoning begins to falter. This is when bitterness can easily take root. Satan will then have a strong foothold in your mind.

Why do some people allow even the first thoughts of resentment and envy to lodge in their minds? Why do some brethren allow such negative poison to even enter their minds in the first place? The answer is simple: they don't really discern the outright deadliness of it. They don't realise the full danger.

Just a little complaining seems innocent enough. Just a little grouching, or grumbling about something, the weather, the job, the boss, the house, the garden, the spouse, the deacon, the minister, another member. Everybody does it. It's natural to complain. It won't hurt. It's not true of course but it provides a convenient excuse.

"Let your conversation (conduct) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what men shall do unto me." Heb 13:5-6

The spirit of complaining about small things can lead to complaining about God's Church and His Work or the way things are done! Such thinking is absolutely wrong. It overlooks the sinister danger that a little complaining, or a little bitterness, can become habit – addictive. You are in charge of your own mind; don't allow Satan to inoculate it with spiritual heroin.

So what can you do to conquer every harmful root of bitterness? If you have tended to associate with people who are "users" of the drug of bitterness, who complain about circumstances, situations, people, places, government, and authority – then remove yourself from such influences. "Be not deceived: evil communications (companions) corrupt good manners. (Moral habits) 1 Cor 15:33

Don't maintain close fellowship with people who are bitter, and don't assume that you are strong enough to withstand their influence. Quite often a person will leave the Church because of an offense or hurt feelings. They will leave perhaps without any apparent anger or resentment. But if the problem wasn't dealt with inside the Church, then later on feelings can turn to bitterness outside the Church. Some people then proceed to attack the Church, something they probably said they would never do. Why? Because a root of bitterness has set in.

Most drug addicts admit that they began using drugs because of associating with others who used them. Many people who are bitter got that way by the identical route.

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Prov 13:20

Remember, Adam and Eve associated with – listened to – Satan. They allowed the serpent to beguile them, and sinned against God. So don't take foolish chances by associating with someone who is bitter.

Another thing you can do is to learn to intercept your thoughts. Custom officials know that most drugs come into the country from abroad so they keep a close check on all vehicles and people that come into the country. You can do the same thing with your thoughts. You can catch those resentful, bitter, envious thoughts at the border of your mind. Don't even let them enter in!

Satan is walking about seeking whom he may devour. But we can fight. Put on the whole armour of God. (Eph 6:10-18) Bible study and prayer build faith, and as verse 16 shows, with the shield of faith you can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. That includes those darts dipped in the poison of bitterness.

The best defence of course, is an alert vigorous offensive. In other words, the best way to overcome any spiritual weakness is to aggressively replace it with a positive attitude of mind. Herbert W Armstrong said that overcoming sin is like getting air out of a bottle. The best way to do it is to pour water in, thus displacing the air. So, the best way to overcome sin or bitterness is to replace them with the positive fruits of God's Holy Spirit. Do as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians that if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Phil 4:8)

Entering the Kingdom of God is not as easy as falling off a log; it requires positive, diligent effort, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2Cor 10:5)

We have been called to the most exciting and exalted position ever afford to any group of people. Satan knows your part in God's plan, and he doesn't want you there. He works constantly to sow discord and disunity among the brethren. Most of those who leave the Church become bitter and never come back. That is because the bitterness grows. A person just doesn't wake up one morning and says; "I have a root of bitterness" It comes on a person gradually.

It can start from a simple misunderstanding, or lack of communication. Brooding over hurt feelings because of something said to you, or some form of correction can begin to eat at the mind and ferment into wrong thoughts. Then, before you know it, a root of bitterness springs up that could take you right out of God's Church. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Psa 119:165

We should also guard against causing someone else to develop a root of bitterness. We must work hard not to offend others. It would be truly awful if we caused someone to have a root of bitterness that took them out of the Church. We have a responsibility to other brethren, not only those in the C.G.F but also our brethren in the Laodicean Church and Synagogue of Satan.

Examine your life! Have you been as cheerful, happy and positive as you should be? Or have you allowed a measure of envy, resentment or bitterness to cloud your attitude? Have you been expressing the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Love, joy, peace. Check up on yourself.

One young drug addict told others who might be tempted to try heroin: "When I started, it was a big kick. I was doing something nobody else was doing. It was a thrill. But now I know better. I would tell kids today, don't go near it. Don't think you can beat it. Nobody beats it."

His words apply equally to spiritual heroin. Don't go near it. Don't think you can beat it. Nobody beats it! So, don't let any form of bitterness take root. Keep away from spiritual heroin, and avoid by all means, a root of bitterness.