

# THE TEACHINGS OF MORRIS VENDEN

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### CHAPTER ONE- THE TEACHINGS OF MORRIS VENDEN

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## **LISTING OF VENDEN'S BOOKS-MAGAZINES-CAMPMEETING TRANSCRIPTS**

### **BOOKS INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY**

[SBF] - "Salvation by Faith and Your Will," Morris L. Venden, Southern Publishing Association, 1978, 128 pages, paperback.

[FTW] - "Faith that Works," Morris L. Venden, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980, 375 pages, hardback.

[ROE] - "The Return of Elijah," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 110 pages, paperback.

[DO] - "Defeated Demons," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 16 pages, paperback booklet.

[GN] - "Good News and Bad News About the Judgment," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 96 pages, paperback.

[TP] - "The Pillars," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 109 pages, paperback.

[MCR] - "How to Make Christianity Real," Morris Venden, Concerned Communications, 1982, 168 pages, paperback.

[OOF] - "Obedience of Faith," Morris Venden, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983, 95 pages, paperback.

[TKG] - "To Know God," Morris Venden, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983, 125 pages, paperback.

[NWI] - "Never Without an Intercessor." (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 1996).

**I've added the review of this book at the end of this document.**

### **MAGAZINE ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY**

[TTI-1] - "Morris Venden Talks to Insight, Part 1," Morris Venden and Editor, "Insight" Magazine, May 8, 1979, pages 7-11.

[TTI-2] - "Morris Venden Talks to Insight, Part 2," Morris Venden and Editor, "Insight" Magazine, May 15, 1979, pages 6-11.

[TCT] - "The Christmas Tree," Morris L. Venden, "Adventist Review," December 24, 1981, pages 4-5.

[SAS] - "What Jesus said about sanctification," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, January, 1982, pages 6-7.

[SAFR] - "What Jesus said about faith and relationship," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, March, 1982, pages 8-9.

[SAH] - "What Jesus said about Himself," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, May, 1982, pages 18-19.

[JSAP] - "What Jesus said about perfection," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, July, 1982, pages 8-9.

[SAPJ] - "What Jesus said about a pre-Advent judgment," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, September, 1982, pages 14-16.

[SITP] - "What Jesus said about the prophets," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, November, 1982, pages 22-23.

### **CAMPMEETING SERIES TRANSCRIPTS INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY**

[1-7 AUC CM] - Sermon Series at Atlantic Union Conference Campmeeting, Summer, 1979. (This was a seven-part lecture series, and each sermon is numbered: 1 AUC CM, 2 AUC CM, etc.)

Of the above materials, "Good News and Bad News About the Judgment," and "The Pillars," are among Venden's best books, for they tend to deal with doctrinal aspects on which he is more in agreement with traditional Adventism. To these two books should be added nearly all of the August through December sections of "Faith that Works." By the end of July, Venden had covered the means of salvation and had turned to other topics. Thinking, doubtless, that his audience was smaller, he gave some unusual material in his "Insight" articles and AUC Camp meeting Series. Seven of his nine published books were issued since 1981.

## **CHAPTER ONE- THE TEACHINGS OF MORRIS VENDEN**

Many people have thought highly of Morris Venden for many years. His father and uncle were known to be men of God, dedicated evangelists, pastors and church leaders. Over the years, Morris Venden has had a special ministry to individuals who have found it difficult to overcome their sins. There are those who have been troubled by the standards found in the Scriptures, and not understanding the overcoming power available in Jesus, have considered those standards as an impossible hurdle separating them from approaching Christ. They did not realize that they need only come as they are, and then having accepted Christ and remaining daily

with Him, through study, prayer and witnessing, they will be given a strengthened will to resist temptation and follow in God's appointed way for their lives.

And it appears that Elder Venden himself had a problem in coming to Christ and remaining with Him, while knowing that he still had personal problems that were not solved. With all this in mind, Morris Venden prepared an adaptation of the Advent Message in an effort to help not only others, but also himself. The resulting synthesis is a strong emphasis on the necessity of a personal daily relationship with Christ, and an under-emphasis (to put it mildly) of obedience, standards, and the resisting and overcoming of sin.

Perhaps this may have been in reaction to an imbalance over the years in the organizational presentation of the message: an emphasis on standards and doctrines with less attention to Christ our Righteousness who enables us to choose and obey those standards and doctrines.

His emphasis on taking time every day with Jesus, has enabled Venden's message to bring help to many. But, unfortunately, he has mistakenly assumed that this emphasis required a depreciation of the importance and necessity of decidedly choosing high standards and personally resisting temptation and sin in the daily life of the Christian.

The tragedy is that Elder Venden has not recognized that a powerful daily walk with Jesus has dynamite in it for through it the power of God can enable us to vigorously resist and conquer sin and obey God's requirements by a decided act of the will.

This misunderstanding by Morris Venden of the strengthened will of the Christian has produced an involved doctrinal presentation that, in several aspects, is different than the historic Adventism the Bible-Spirit of Prophecy beliefs of our forefathers.

At this time there are a number of individuals who are openly opposing Elder Venden's books and lectures, while still others are asking, "Just what IS the problem? What is Elder Venden teaching that is different or is it different at all?"

#### **Here are some of his basic beliefs in regard to sin and the Christian experience:**

We are justified apart from any effort or activity on our part other than coming to God and accepting Him. We are sanctified as we continue to do this coming and accepting till we die. Coming and accepting involves daily prayer, study and witnessing. The way we come is the way we are to live thereafter. Sanctification is really the same as justification as far as our part is concerned. All we are ever to do is to come to Christ. And that is ALL that we are ever to do.

Neither at conversion or thereafter are we to try to obey God, His commandments, standards, or Scriptural principles. Even to begin to do so, is a works program and legalism, and will only injure us and keep us from heaven if we continue doing so.

Only effortless, spontaneous obedience is genuine obedience. It is the only kind acceptable to God, for God does the obedience in us apart from our conscious choice.

#### **The underlying reasoning behind this theological view is based on a belief in**

- (1) the post-conversion depravity of the human will,
- (2) the fact that Christ was not like us, and
- (3) the idea that God does not expect nor want us to try to obey Him in this life.

(1) Man cannot in the present life obey God and even if he were to do so, the very intention, act and result of that obedience would be sin in God's sight. And this applies not only to the unregenerate who have never come to Christ, it also applies to those who are daily, continually living in Him. This new light is proven by the theological points that Christ was not like us and God does not expect us to obey Him.

(2) Christ took the unfallen nature of Adam and therefore was not like us. His temptations were different: He was tempted to use His divine nature to aid him in obeying God, whereas we are tempted to use our human abilities and willpower to aid us obeying God. If Christ had actually "come in the flesh" (1 John 4:3) flesh like ours, and had really taken "the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2: 15) and had actually been "in all things" "made like unto His brethren" (Heb 2: 17), He would have sinned also. This is proven "by the theological view that man's will is depraved and cannot obey God in this life.

(3) God does not want man to try to obey Him through an act of the will. He does not expect it, nor does He empower it. Mankind is not to try and obey God neither before conversion nor afterward. Any that attempt to do so are doomed to failure and ultimate perdition if they do not leave this Laodicean lukewarmness. Efforts on our part to obey God are sin. This is proven by the theological belief that man's will is hopelessly incapable of obeying God, and the concept that Christ did not come to earth to give us an example of obeying God in human nature, strengthened by the power of God.

And there is a fourth point:

(4) Sin is NOT the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) it is separation from God. When we are with God, we are no longer responsible for sin, though we may still have known and cherished sins. If we remain with God, through personal study and prayer, the known and cherished sins will eventually drop off, but even if they do not, we will still be saved. Salvation is entirely keyed to being with God; obedience has nothing to do with it, as far as we are concerned. **(Note here that Venden's key text, Isaiah 59:2, teaches that separation from God is the RESULT of sin, which is the transgression of God's Law. Separation is not the cause, or the sin itself.)"**

We have only one obligation and responsibility in the working out of the great controversy: We must yield our will to God and no longer try to use it in regard to obeying Him. (But we can still use it in relation to seeking Him daily through study and prayer.) God will then work "through us" and this is how He will do it: He will give us spontaneous faith, and impulsive obedience, an obedience that is so natural that it requires no effort of the will on our part. Only THIS is genuine obedience, nothing else is acceptable to God, or can be. Temptations will be miraculously taken away. They will just vanish before us, if we are giving "a corner of each day" to God.

We are never, never, to resist or fight sin. When temptation strikes, know that you are helpless before it, unless God removes its power without your effort. And this "no effort" includes using Bible study, singing, memorizing and quoting Scripture, claiming Bible promises, or asking Jesus for help in overcoming the temptation. All such "devices" are worthless and are only so many crutches to keep you from the only real help: coming to Christ each day in study and prayer. He alone can put temptation and sin from your life; your part is to yield passively and wait with the "patience of the saints" for Him to enable you to "keep the commandments of God."

Until we have this kind of obedience, partially or continually, we are to keep waiting for God to do it in and through us. Until then, we are not to worry about sin. God will take care of that in His own time. Do not worry about "time schedules" (the coming crisis, the close of probation and the end of the world), only look unto Jesus and wait for Him to get rid of all your sins for you.

**If we wanted to summarize Morris Venden's theology of sin and obedience into one statement, it would be this:**

Accepting Christ frees a person from responsibility for his sins and all his actions, with but this exception: daily coming to Christ in prayer and study. Obedience, witnessing and the overcoming of known sin will be the fruit of this entrance into irresponsibility for sin by the acceptance and daily re-coming to Christ.

Morris Venden's belief centers around the idea that man cannot resist sin by an effort of his will, even though he asks God to help him. Instead, the victory must come in a different way: Man must wait for God to miraculously take away the temptation. It was back in the late 1950s, while he was a pastor in the Northern California Conference, that he crystallized on his view. Here is how it happened:

### HOW THIS NEW CONCEPT CAME TO VENDEN

"I'll never forget the day this truth dawned on me. I had been studying this subject of victorious living, and I was beginning to conclude that the entire process of sanctification was based on the ongoing fellowship and relationship with Jesus. It looked too good to be true. I could hardly believe it could be that simple. And I remember asking God for a sample that morning: 'Please, Lord, this sounds like the answer. I think I understand the theory, but need to experience it as well. Please give me an example of it today:

"I went about my work and forgot all about that prayer until noon, when I was driving down a busy street in Sacramento. Suddenly a temptation of the flesh hit me, and at the moment it did, there was a cold shiver like an electric shock that ran over me, and that didn't make sense, because it was a hot summer day. Evidently my revulsion at the temptation caused the cold shiver. At the same moment, the temptation was gone, and even though I momentarily tried, I couldn't remember what it was. It was like some kind of amnesia." - MCR, 167,168.

An experience of a cold shiver like an electric shock" provided the needed proof that his concept of the new obedience was correct.

Here is an illustration: In 1979, a chiropractor in town decided to convert some Adventists to tongues. So he came out and told them his story, with the hope that it would convince them: He had been in doubt of tongues and feared that it was of the devil, and so would have nothing to do with it, even though encouraged by friends to attend Pentecostal meetings.

Then one day as he was walking alone through his office, the "proof" that tongues was of God came to him forcibly and from then on he knew it was sacred and from heaven. The thought had just come to mind that he should not attend a tongues meeting that night when a hand pressed down on his neck from above and behind, forcibly stopping him in his tracks. He immediately had the 'doctrinal proof' he needed, and went to the phone and told his friend he would be there that evening. That night he received tongues and became a lay preacher and an eloquent defender of it.

Was this strange physical experience a proof of the genuineness of the doctrine? I think not. Let me tell you more: This individual was a very kindly person who lived alone with his daughter. After taking her to the meetings, she also received "tongues" as a permanent "gift". Following this experience, she was placed in a mental hospital several times, and when counseled with, she freely spoke of her deep hatred for God. She refused to have anything to do with Christianity or the Bible, and yet that same day, and every time thereafter in which people prayed with her father, and she was present, she would, while her eyes were closed, begin speaking in tongues. This always cheered her father, but the bottom line is this: Her father had carefully explained to the Adventists that the Pentecostal doctrine of tongues was the highest level of Christian experience and could only come to one who had been baptized by the Holy Ghost. Since these Adventists did not have it, they were on a lower level of experience. And yet his daughter who openly admitted her hatred of God, continually had this "deeper" Christian experience! Since that time, she has continued to enter psychopathic institutions, in the hope of obtaining the help she would not find in Jesus.



Beware of doctrinal "proofs" that are based on experience, rather than the plain Word of God.

**In a published interview by "Insight" Magazine, Morris Venden explained his theological foundations. Here is his statement:**

### **TWO PACKAGES AND I BUY THE SECOND**

"There doesn't seem to be any question that the definition of sin, and the nature of Christ, and perfectionism are a package. I think that the contention is quite valid that if a person defines sin primarily in terms of transgression of the law, in legalistic terms and understandings, then he is going to need to have a Saviour who has struggled with all of his same temptations to transgress the law. In the process one ends up with perfectionism and a behaviorally oriented Christianity.

"Now, if you go back to define sin in terms of relationship, sin in terms of living a life apart from God, you don't need to have a Savior exactly as you are. In fact, His very difference indicates that He could have lived independently, but He chose to depend on God. I feel that His dependence upon the Father is the essence of Christ's example to us. After all, He did say, 'Without Me you can do nothing: Allowing a difference between our nature and Christ's nature prevents us from getting bogged down in perfectionism, because that's not where the issue lies, anyway. Perfection of character must be seen in terms of relationship, not in terms of spelling out ethical and moral options.

"I don't know anybody who believes there is any kind of righteousness apart from Jesus, not even among perfectionists. I haven't heard anyone naive enough to say that. If a person believes that we are going to have to stand without power from above during a certain time, then he does believe in a righteousness apart from Jesus" TTI-2, 9-10.

**What we learn from this statement: Venden sees two doctrinal views (or "packages") within the Church to choose from.**

The first "package" is the one found in historic Adventism.

Package One: Sin is the transgression of the Law. Therefore we need a Saviour who has struggled with all the temptations we have had. We should therefore be concerned that our behavior be Christ-like, and we should aim for perfection of character (with the help of this Saviour who was in all points tempted like as we, yet without sin).

The second "package" is the one Venden stands by.

Package Two: Sin is not the transgression of the Law of God; it is a broken relationship with God. (Restoring the relationship removes the sin.) With this definition of sin, we do not need a Saviour who was like us (in nature or in temptations). We need not His example of obedience, but only His example of dependence, for it is the relationship that is important, not the obedience. Because Christ did not have a nature like ours, we do not need to concern ourselves with perfection of character. Indeed, perfection of character can result spontaneously from the relationship, and not from ethical and moral principles (Christian standards and obedience to them).

(In the third paragraph of the above statement, Venden is referring to those who are concerned with the facts given in "Early Writings," page 71. And yet, such statements need not be 'logical-ed' away, they need only be accepted as they read. As you have opportunity to read the multitude of Venden quotes that follow in this present study, you will be able to better see how our paraphrase agrees exactly with Venden's statement on the "two packages."

In the statement, quoted above, we find the heart of Venden theology. It is clear that he is a mature theologian in his own right. He is innovative and the result of his thinking is a unique theological system that may be similar to that of a number of others, but nevertheless stands uniquely different.

What confuses people is that he speaks of obedience, keeping the commandments, overcoming, victory, and perfection, and listeners and readers assume that he believes and teaches the Spirit of Prophecy view of these concepts. But he does not.

**It is not the "what," but the "how," that is of overarching importance here.** After reading the chapter on "victory, overcoming and perfection," then go on to the later chapters that tell how it is to be done. There you will learn that

- (1) it can only be done by God, not us, and
- (2) this obedience must come without any effort on our part, and
- (3) our only part is to come to Christ and wait for deliverance without doing anything about our sins.

When Morris says that we cannot resist temptation or conquer sin by our unaided efforts, he really means that we cannot overcome temptation or sin, if we use any effort of our own. It must be done solely by the Holy Spirit without any push, try, effort or force of will on our part. That is how we are to obey "in His strength." All this may seem somewhat confusing, but these decorative phrases are added to enable Venden's theology to be acceptable to Adventist readers. Perhaps he does not do this intentionally, but the result is the same. Thus he can write a book, titled "Obedience of Faith," when his teaching is that we are saved by a faith relationship, quite apart from whether or not it may include obedience fulfilled in us by God. As Venden sees it, all true obedience in mankind can only come when God produces that obedience in him quite independently of his power of choice to obey.

If all that I have said so far is true, it is quite shocking. (Whether or not it is true, you will be able to ascertain from the statements of Venden's that you will soon read in this study.) But perhaps most shocking of all, are Venden's disparagements of all efforts by Christians to resist sin or obey God. This strange ridicule arises from his firm belief that it is useless for people to try to obey God or resist sin. But such comments should raise the danger flag to the sincere reader who wishes to fulfill in his own life the Bible-Spirit of Prophecy principles bequeathed him as a precious legacy.

**Basically, Morris Venden has a non-Adventist view of sin and the will and obedience in the life of the Christian. But most tragically, these statements will generally be mingled with beautiful thoughts on the importance of living with Jesus. And because people want this latter so much, they overlook the underlying teachings that they are gradually imbibing as they read his books.**

Now it is time to listen to Morris Venden. Here is a topical collection of some of his statements:

## **THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **I AGREE WITH FORD, BRINSMEAD, AND PAXTON(ANGLICAN MINISTER)**

[Introductory question: "Would you agree with Paxton's understanding of justification by faith?"]  
"Declared righteous? And not made righteous? I'd go a step further. I agree with Paxton, I agree with Desmond Ford, I agree with Robert Brinsmead, on justification. I do not agree with them on sanctification. My understanding of their meaning of justification is that it is a declaration, and that our justification is not in any way based on or caused by anything that is done in us. I buy that. So I do not differ from these men or Paxton on that." TTI-1,11.



## **WE MUST COME BACK TO THE FOUNDATION**

"We tried to build these walls [of the final message for mankind], little by little, and then more and more with the foundation taken for granted. And so when someone comes along and says that we missed our foundation, we ought to listen. I'm going to tell you something that is personal: This man Geoffrey Paxton, who wrote "Shaking of Adventism." I had a chance to sit down and talk with him privately for a few hours and I asked him a little about his background, what made him tick? You know his contention is that Seventh-day Adventists have neglected the 'what God has done for us' [the atonement made at the cross]. I think basically that is what he is trying to say.

I discovered how he became interested in Seventh-day Adventists. As an evangelical he came to the conclusion from his own study that the popular evangelical world had neglected sanctification and he became very interested in sanctification. He wanted to know more about it, and as he began to study about sanctification and how that works, he said, Where can I look? 'SDA's! They are known for their work in that area. So he went to the Adventists to find out more about sanctification. I couldn't believe it when I heard it. But in the process he got derailed from his original purpose and came to the conclusion, right or wrong, that we had neglected the foundation, justification, and that's how the book evolved. But his primary interest was in living the Christian life!

Now it is for sure that it is ridiculous to try to build walls on a shaky or crumbly foundation. We are not going to finish our mission as Seventh-day Adventists until we get the foundation solid and we build the walls solid. The foundation is the work that God has done for us; the walls are the work that God wants to do in us, the work that God has done for us." 4 AUC CM. [Geoffrey Paxton, an Anglican minister, was the headmaster of a theological school in Brisbane, Australia, in 1970 when he converted Robert Brinsmead to Anglican modern theology (see FF-5-7). Paxton is no friend of historic Adventism; its people, its work, or its prophet,]

## **WHY THE "NEW THEOLOGY" IS EXCITED**

"Is Jesus' acceptance of us continual and ongoing because of the cross? Yes. And there's no point in trying to go anywhere else in terms of obedience or transformation or character development or victory until we get that settled, and get it nailed down and never forget it . . . And these people who are excited, almost to the point of fanaticism on justification nowadays; well, they have good reason to be excited and I suspect that some of them who are almost fanatical about it are going through a natural reaction because for the first time they've grasped that! They're not going to let anyone make them turn loose from that. They are clutching it to their hearts." 4 AUC CM.

## **EITHER THE "NEW THEOLOGY" OR BY FAITH ALONE**

"For a long time the church has held two incompatible beliefs. One is that we can keep God's commandments, that we can overcome. Some have even dealt with things like perfection. The other is that while we do need God's help, we are supposed to work hard on our own obedience. Those two are incompatible.

"At least the 'new theology' emphasis is consistent in that area. They say, Yes, you are supposed to work hard on your own obedience and do the best you can. But you cannot obey, you cannot overcome, you cannot keep God's commandments. At least they are consistent, for the two go together.

"The time will come when we will have to either join the 'new theology' and reject the possibility of overcoming, or we will have to find out what obedience by faith alone in Jesus Christ is all about." GN, 63.

## **ANYTHING IN ADDITION TO FAITH IS WRONG?**

"For years, the majority position in our church has apparently been justification by faith alone and sanctification by faith plus works. We've gotten the idea that victorious living requires something we have to do

ourselves in addition to faith. But is this correct? Wouldn't it be too bad to spend all your time and energy toward something at which you can never succeed, while ignoring that which you can? As a result, the Christian church has become filled with people strong enough to conform outwardly, to be moral externally. Somehow we have gotten the idea that if we can be good enough, then we can be Christians." SBF, 24.25.

### **VENDEN'S BASIC CONCERN IS FAITH ALONE**

"In all of the discussion and dialogue and debate in our church today, there is one common thread. It is often disguised, but the basic issue is whether obedience comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ or by our own hard work." GN, 62.

**[But this is an oversimplification of the possibilities. There is also the Bible-Spirit of Prophecy method: Obedience by faith alone in Jesus, who will sustain me and give me instant victories and will also strengthen my will to fight and overcome sin. Venden's view is that any resisting of sin is wrong and legalism; we must only submit and wait for God to give us miraculous, effortless victories, without any effort on our part. But it is the purpose of God to give us divine help as we deepen our resolves and intensify our will power. He wants us to be strong in His strength; not weak, yielded to His strength.]**

### **THE NATURE OF SIN WE ARE NOT SINFUL BECAUSE WE SIN**

"It is the sinful condition of mankind that results in sinful deeds, whether the deeds are thought of as right or wrong. Man sins because he is sinful. He is not sinful 'because he sins. Notice again the major issue in sin is separation from God. You don't have to sin to be sinful; all you have to do is get yourself born! Where we to try to put all this into equation form, we might say that Mankind = Sin, and Righteousness = Jesus. Jesus is the only one born into this world who was not born sinful, not born separated from God. Jesus is the only one who was ever born righteous." TKG, 22, 23.

### **SEPARATION, NOT SIN, IS THE PROBLEM**

"All of us who are born into this world are born separated from God. Jesus provided a way by which we can be brought back into the relationship with God that was severed when Adam sinned. The first symptom of being born separated from God is that we are born self-centered. That's the problem. We are all self-centered. From this self-centeredness springs everything that we call sin." FTW, 162.

### **DO NOT DEFINE SIN IN RELATION TO BEHAVIOR**

"We must never define sin and temptation primarily in terms of behavior. The issue is not of doing right and not doing wrong but of relationship. Am I willing to submit to God in dependence, or am insisting on living independent of God? That's the entire issue. It's what started sin in the first place with Lucifer in heaven, and in the Garden of Eden. If that's true, then Jesus as my example does not have to be a Saviour with sinful propensities to do wrong." SBF, 94.

### **WHAT SIN IS**

"Sin's number one manifestation is self-centeredness. We have tended to define sin in terms of doing bad things, and if we are strong willed enough to refrain from doing bad things, we think that we have righteousness." FTW, 164.

### **THE ISSUE IN SIN IS NOT DOING BAD THINGS**

"The real issue in sin is not in doing bad things, but rather in living our lives, good or bad, apart from Christ. Since we are sinners by nature, we of ourselves are never going to be able to produce any obedience." FTW, 165.

## THE FORMULA FOR SIN

"If righteousness equals mankind plus Jesus, then the opposite of righteousness is sin. Then the formula for sin is mankind minus Jesus. That's sin. Oh, but this man may be a good moral person. He might not think of drinking, smoking, or dancing. He might be a tithe-paying, health-reforming, family-worship, Sabbath-keeping Adventist. Might be a church elder or deacon. But if he's living a life apart from Jesus, he's living a life of sin. Isn't that right? We have been living our spotless lives apart from Jesus." 4 AUC CM.

## SIN-BEING OR LIVING APART FROM GOD

"So we can come up with a twofold definition for sin; sin, singular; and sins, plural. Sin, singular, is any life that is apart from God. And sins, plural, are the bad things that are done as a result of living apart from God.

"Sin, singular, is living a life apart from God, and it makes no difference how good a life that might be. There are many people who live good, moral lives apart from God. But they are living in sin. Whether or not they ever do anything wrong, they are living in sin. Their good lives are sin. Can you buy that? Romans 14:23 says it: 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' And anything I do that is not done through the faith relationship with Jesus is sin, even mowing the widow's lawn. Because if I am self-centered from living a life apart from God, then I can mow the widow's lawn only for selfish reasons. It is possible to do all the right things for all the wrong reasons." TKG,22.

## BOTH RIGHT AND WRONG CAN BE SIN

"Therefore the greatest single sin (which causes others) and the primary issue in temptation is to do anything, right or wrong outside of the faith relationship with Christ." SBF, 102.

## THREE DEFINITIONS OF SIN

"Many today seem to be choosing from three options concerning the human nature of Christ. One is to believe that Jesus was like Adam before the Fall, and therefore to believe that we can't obey the law of God as Jesus did, because He was different from us. The second is to believe that we can obey God's law. After all, Jesus did it, and He was just like us. The third is that Jesus was like Adam both before and after the Fall. Let's go over each option in more detail.

"Number one: If we define sin in terms of a fallen human nature, Jesus would have to be like Adam before the Fall, because He was not a sinner. We are sinners. Therefore, Jesus was different then we are and He could not be our example. He had an advantage over us in terms of obedience, and we, as sinners, cannot be expected to obey. Indeed, we find it impossible. So instead, we accept His substitutionary obedience and trust His obedience placed to our account in heaven.

Number two: If we define sin in terms of transgression of the law, Jesus could have been like Adam after the Fall. This viewpoint says one is a sinner because he sins (and he is not a sinner until he does sin). Jesus was just like Adam after the fall; He had a sinful nature just as we do. He avoided being a sinner by never doing anything bad. Thus if Jesus was just like us, but never sinned, then He becomes our example in all points, and we can obey as He did, by refraining from transgression.

Number three: If we define sin in terms of a broken relationship, Jesus would then be like Adam before the Fall, because He had a spiritual nature from the beginning that was never separated from His Father. But He was also like Adam after the Fall, because He lived in complete dependence upon His Father in order to produce the works we see manifest in His life. If the issue in sin is a broken relationship (rather than a sinful nature, or sinful deeds) then Jesus can be our example in showing us how to live in dependence upon a Higher Power. We can obey, because we can become partakers of His spiritual nature, experience the restoration of the broken relationship, and depend upon His strength to overcome. The result? The possibility of total obedience to the law of God.

I believe in the third option. I believe that the sin problem goes far deeper than simply doing bad things. The issue in sin is a broken relationship; a life lived independently of God. Who has the greater temptation to live independently? The one who is sinless or the one who isn't? In that sense, Jesus is a far greater example than we could ask for.

In summary, Jesus was divine and He was human. He took upon His sinless spiritual nature the liabilities of our fallen nature. In this weakened state, He gave us an example of victory from above, rather than victory from within. And that's the real issue in the end, anyway." SAH, 19.

### **[MY RESPONSE TO WHAT IS SIN?]**

[1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Therefore, sin is the breaking of God's law, which is an action. Since sin is the result of an action, rather than a part of our nature, as taught in the false gospel, we begin to understand the harmony that is expressed by all Bible authors regarding sin.

James says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. This scripture states that sin comes by knowledge that brings individuals to the realization of their need to make a decision and use the power of free choice that God has given them.

What brings the knowledge of sin? Paul wrote: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay I had not known sin. But by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Romans 7:7-9

Guilt does not come until there is a knowledge of the law, but willful ignorance is not excused. Jesus taught this in John 15: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I have not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father," John 15:22,23.

"If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject." *Testimonies, vol. 1. 116.*

"None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had."

*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5 1145.*

For over one hundred years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church consistently taught that sin was the result of the action of choice; that before we become guilty of sin, our mind must consent to the temptation. This teaching does not disregard the fact that we all have a sinful nature, but that this sinful nature can successfully resist temptation when we come to Jesus and experience a rebirth through the re-creating power of Christ working in and through us.

With a clear understanding of this, we can better understand how Jesus was born with the same flesh and blood that you and I possess, yet He never once sinned. He always made the right choice, through the power of the Holy Spirit, by fully surrendering to this divine agent.

Jesus came to this world as Adam was after his fall. He was born with our sinful flesh, but not our sinning flesh(carnal flesh). Because of this, He is our great example and if we follow His pattern of success, we too, may overcome through the divine power which He freely gives to the fully surrendered soul. His physical nature was fallen(sinful flesh), but His spiritual nature was not.

To substantiate this, I present to you the following quotations:

"Jesus also told them {the angels} that ... He should take man's fallen nature, and His strength would not even be equal with theirs." *Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1, 25.*

"It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man, that He might be made perfect through suffering, and endure Himself the strength of Satan's temptations, that he might the better know how to succor those who should be tempted." Ibid. vol. 4, 115.

"This was the reception the Saviour met as He came to a fallen world... And took upon Himself man's nature that He might save the fallen race. Instead of men glorifying God for the honor He had conferred upon them in thus sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, by giving Him a place in their affections, there seemed to be no rest nor safety for the infant Saviour. Jehovah could not trust to the inhabitants of the world His Son, who came into the world that through His divine power He might redeem fallen man." *Review and Herald Dec. 24, 1872*

"Through His humiliation and poverty Christ would identify with the weakness of the fallen race... The great work of redemption could be carried out only by the Redeemer taking the place of fallen Adam... The King of glory proposed to humble Himself to fallen humanity. He would take man's fallen nature." *Review and Herald Feb. 24, 1874*

"Christ stooped to take upon Himself human nature, that He might reach the fallen race and lift them up... [He] partook of our human nature, that He might reach humanity." *Testimonies, vol. 5, 746-747.*

But many say that Jesus was not like us, that He was not as we are in the world, that He was divine, and we cannot overcome as He overcame. But Paul writes, 'Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.' *Review and Herald March 1, 1892.*

We see from these quotations that over many years the servant of the Lord was consistent, in her writings, that Christ took upon Himself the nature of Adam after his fall.

[Option 1: Sin = fallen human nature = Original Sin. Jesus took nature of Adam before the fall, because we cannot obey. Option 2: the Bible-Spirit of Prophecy view: Sin = transgression of the law (1 John 3 :4). Jesus had a human nature like ours, so that we can obey relying on His strength, as He relied on His Father to empower His nature and enable Him to consistently choose the right. Option 3 (Venden's option): Sin = a broken relationship. We can only obey by yielding to God our willingness to choose between right and wrong, as He did. But, it should be noted that Option 3 is very similar to Option 1 in two very definite ways: (1) in both, Christ took the unfallen nature of Adam, and (2) in both (according to other statements by Venden) we cannot obey God or resist sin by an act of will or choice in this life. So it appears that Option 3 may also be related to Original Sin as Option 1 is. Option 1: They cannot obey in this life. Option 3: They cannot obey in this life, but God can obey for them, using their faculties to do it.] END OF MY RESPONSE TO WHAT IS SIN?]

## **THE NATURE OF CHRIST** **VENDEN ON THE NATURE OF CHRIST**

"Well,' someone else interjects, 'Jesus could never have faced temptation the way I do today, because it was natural for Him to be good. And by the time He reached the age of accountability at twelve, He had a perfect record behind Him, while I had already formed sinful habits. How could He suffer and go through conflicts the way I do?' And right here we have to understand the difference between the behaviorist, the one who thinks of sin and temptation in terms of doing bad things, has to have a Lord with the same nature as he has before he can rest or be satisfied. And I've heard people insisting on that. They say, 'Jesus had the very same nature that I have, except it was sinless, with no sinful desires or tendencies.'

That's impossible. It's amazing the extent of mental manipulations that some have performed trying to figure out that paradox. But the behaviorist has to do that, he's the one who gets into the midnight sessions attempting to analyze and dissect Christ's human and divine natures. He's the one who has to have a Saviour who goes through everything he experiences. Otherwise he'll claim that Jesus had an unfair advantage over us and that we can't expect to live victorious lives today. " Jesus had the nature of man when it came to physical



infirmities after four thousand years of degeneracy, including mental power and moral worth. When it came to the desire or the tendency to do evil, Jesus had the absolute, perfect, sinless nature of Adam before he fell." SBF, 92, 93.

### **JESUS HAD ADAM'S SINLESS NATURE**

"Of course, Jesus was born different. He had a sinless human nature, the same as Adam had before his fall, concerning propensity or tendency to sin. Therefore it was natural for Jesus to be good. I was born with a sinful nature, and it's natural for me to be bad." SBF, 86.

### **IT WAS NATURAL FOR JESUS TO DO GOOD**

"It was natural for Jesus to do good (outwardly and inwardly). He had no propensities to evil. Evil was repulsive to Him." SBF, 87.

### **NEVER LIKE JESUS**

"We will never be just like Jesus. Jesus was sinless from the start, we weren't. Jesus was the Son of God, we aren't. Jesus never needed a Saviour, we do."-FTW, 170.

### **ONE LIABILITY HE DID NOT TAKE**

"When Jesus took the liabilities of fallen man, there was one that He did not take--man's sinful nature. He had a spiritual nature from birth that carried with it no propensities to sin. Jesus had no desire for sin. Can you say that about yourself? Could you ever say that about any other person born into this world of sin?" SAH, 19.'

### **JESUS DID NOT USE HIS ADVANTAGE**

"Some people have argued that Jesus had an advantage because of His divinity, that He used His divine nature to live His perfect life on earth. But I would like to suggest that Jesus might have been at a disadvantage because He did not use His inherent divinity. And if Jesus lived His victorious life by relying solely on His Father, then, through Him, all the power of Heaven is at our disposal too, and we can have victories the way that Jesus had" SFB, 83, 84.

**[On several occasions, Morris explains his view of Christ "our Example," and it is this: Jesus had several immense advantages over us. These included natural sinlessness and divine power. But Jesus did not use His divine power while on earth, but only relied upon God. Therefore we must do the same. But Morris avoids the fact that Jesus did use His human will in the battle against sin. By faith in His Father, He exercised His human will to resist sin and obey. Christ's human resistance to sin and obedience to God, through faith in His Father, was the issue in the great controversy, not avoiding the utilization of His divine abilities.]**

### **CHRIST'S TEMPTATIONS WERE NOT LIKE OURS**

"Christ's temptations were not like ours in the sense that He found sinning desirable (as we so often do), but most profoundly like ours in a much more basic sense: He was constantly tempted to break the relationship of dependence and submission and to 'go it alone' on His own strength. Indeed, it was a more severe temptation for Him, since He actually had the power to do so." SBF, 94, footnote.

### **JESUS' TEMPTATION**

"Again, what was the greatest temptation for Jesus? It was not in the realm of doing bad things but in doing whatever He did, miracles, healing, preaching, through His inherent ability." SBF, 96.



## JESUS NEVER HAD TO GO THROUGH OUR STRUGGLE

"Jesus never had to go through the sinner's struggle whether to become a Christian or to continue in sin, but He did have another equally as difficult. [that of not using His divine power] ." SBF, 96.

## JESUS HAD AN ADVANTAGE

"All of this leads us to a very practical question: Did Jesus have some sort of advantage over us? Yes, He had an advantage over us. Jesus never sinned; therefore, He was never tempted to continue to sin, something that I suggest is one our greatest temptations. Jesus never had that." SAH, 19.

## THREE DEFINITIONS OF SIN (REPEATED FROM THE NATURE OF SIN SECTION)

"Many today seem to be choosing from three options concerning the human nature of Christ. One is to believe that Jesus was like Adam before the Fall, and therefore to believe that we can't obey the law of God as Jesus did, because He was different from us. The second is to believe that we can obey God's law. After all, Jesus did it, and He was just like us. The third is that Jesus was like Adam both before and after the Fall. Let's go over each option in more detail.

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Number three: If we define sin in terms of a broken relationship, Jesus would then be like Adam before the Fall, because He had a spiritual nature from the beginning that was never separated from His Father. But He was also like Adam after the Fall, because He lived in complete dependence upon His Father in order to produce the works we see manifest in His life. If the issue in sin is a broken relationship (rather than a sinful nature, or sinful deeds) then Jesus can be our example in showing us how to live in dependence upon a Higher Power. We can obey, because we can become partakers of His spiritual nature, experience the restoration of the broken relationship, and depend upon His strength to overcome. The result? The possibility of total obedience to the law of God.

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In summary, Jesus was divine and He was human. He took upon His sinless spiritual nature the liabilities of our fallen nature. In this weakened state, He gave us an example of victory from above, rather than victory from within. And that's the real issue in the end, anyway." SAH, 19.

## [MY RESPONSE TO THE NATURE OF JESUS]

[What kind of humanity did God take? Was it only "like" but not the same as that of other human beings? Or did He take the full human heredity?

Ellen G. White saw that God had three steps to the platform of truth (EW 258). Satan has three steps down from the platform. The first step is the teaching that Christ took the human nature of man as it was before the Fall. This leads to the second step to the teaching that man cannot find grace to perfectly obey the law of God in this life. This will inevitably lead to the third step — giving up the Sabbath. This last step must logically follow the original premise, for if it be conceded that we cannot obey all the law all the time, then there is no point in the Sabbath being a test question. (*The Incarnation of Christ*, "Adam's Human Nature versus Fallen Human Nature," pp. 7, 8).

He took upon Him our *sinful nature*. — Ellen White, *RH* 12/ 15/96 He took upon Himself *fallen suffering human nature*, degraded and defiled by sin. — Ellen White, *YI* 12/20/1900

He condescended . . . to take upon Himself *fallen human nature*.  
— C. T. Ellingston, *RH* 12/29/ 10

In His humanity Christ partook of our *sinful fallen nature*. -*Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, p. 115

## **END OF MY RESPONSE TO THE NATURE OF JESUS.]**

### **THE NATURE OF MAN WE HAVE ORIGINAL SIN**

Should I become preoccupied with my failures, or preoccupied with a life of faith? Let's consider a few points concerning the relationship of living by faith to several major factors that demand it. The only way we can live by faith, the only way it is possible for us to live the kind of life that God wants us to live, is by faith; is because of the nature of mankind. What is the nature of mankind? Sinful. Are you sinners? Are we sinners? We are born sinners. Babies are sinners? Yes. What do we mean by that we are born sinners? Do we mean that we have something in our very fabric, in our genes and chromosomes? Or do we mean this: that we are born separated from God. Someone sent me a paper, "Who needs Original Sin?" Well, I don't know who needs it, but I know we all have it. I was born in sin; none are righteous. What is wrong? Our hearts are evil and we cannot change them. That's our condition: We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. A very critical point. We can only live by faith, and by faith only, because of our very nature." 3 AUC CM.

**[The paper referred to was a reprint of Dr. Ralph Larson's April 22, 1978 sermon in his church, the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church. That paper will explain to you the terrible danger in this error, for it teaches that we cannot stop sinning; therefore it is impossible for us to actively choose, through the grace of Christ, to obey God and not sin. And this is what Morris teaches.]**

## **AUGUSTINE AND ORIGINAL GUILT.**

"Well, what is wrong with our first birth? Here we can go back to Augustine, the founder of the classic doctrine of original sin. There's been a lot of debate about Augustine's doctrine. Basically he taught that we are born sinners and held responsible for sin from birth. Which means that his doctrine should have been labeled the doctrine of original guilt.

"You can have problems with Augustine's doctrine of original guilt, but there is a legitimate Bible doctrine of original sin. It is found in the historic Augsburg Confession, which says that we are born separated from God. That is the real issue. But even though we are born separated from God, we are not held responsible for that. Therefore, you don't have to do some ritual to a baby or for a baby in order for him to be saved, because the baby is not held responsible for his birth into this world of sin. No one is held responsible for being

born into this world of sin until he has had opportunity to understand the problem intelligently, see his condition, and what can be done to remedy it. Then his responsibility begins." TKG, 21.

**[Augustine, the Roman Catholic theologian, may have taught that we are hopelessly locked into guilt, but Venden in his books teaches that we are hopelessly incapable of obeying God by an effort of the will, strengthened by His grace.]**

### **BY FAITH ALONE-BECAUSE OF OUR NATURE**

"One of the first reasons why obedience has to come by faith only is because of the nature of sin and sinners. We are all sinners, whether we have ever done anything 'wrong' or not. It is not sinning that makes us sinners. It is getting born that makes us sinner" FTW, 161.

**WE ARE BORN SINNERS,**

"We are born sinners, and we sin because we are sinners. We are not sinners because we sin! One of the evidences that we are all sinners is that we all die. You can't argue with that, can you? I was speaking about this subject one time and a university professor spoke up from the back, 'Birds die! Are they sinners?' Yes, they are! And I heard a couple of sinners fighting in the woods behind my house just last night! They had four legs and fur." FTW, 163.

### **THE BASIC ISSUE-SEPARATION NOT OBEDIENCE**

"All of us who are born into this world are born with a problem, we are born separated from God. That is the basic issue in being born sinners. We would remain so forever had it not been for the cross. But because of the cross, we do not have to remain separated from God. God gives every person the option of being born again.

"The reason for studying this point in connection with the subject of obedience is this: If our hearts are evil and we cannot change them, then how could we ever obey? We can't! It is only as we come to Jesus, admitting our helplessness, and accepting Him by faith, that we are put right with God." FTW, 161.

**[This is an important point. Since Venden's view of "obedience by faith" is "trust in God and He does the obeying for us", he here explains that this cannot be otherwise because of our nature. We are not able to obey in this life, so we must trust God to miraculously do it within us without any effort on our part.]**

### **SINNERS TILL JESUS COMES**

"There's another reason why we continually have to have this kind of righteousness. Its because' we are sinners by nature, as we noticed yesterday, and we will need this kind of righteousness right up until Jesus comes, when we are transformed and glorified. Is Jesus' acceptance of us continual and ongoing because of the cross? Yes. And there's no point in trying to go anywhere else in terms of obedience or transformation or character development or victory until we get that settled, and get it nailed down, and never forget it" 4 AUC CM.

### **NO CONTROL OVER OUR MORAL ACTIONS**

"People want to be in control of themselves. Did you know that we are never in control of ourselves. We are controlled by either God or the devil, There is no third choice. We are never in charge of ourselves. I used to think that I could be controlled by God, that I could choose to come under the control of the devil, or I could be in charge of my own life. The only control we have in this world is which of these two powers is going to control us." 3 AUC CM.

**[Venden's view is that we have no control over our actions, and only limited responsibility for them. Our single area of control is in submitting to Christ.]**

**[MY RESPONSE TO MAN'S NATURE and ORIGINAL SIN]**

[The Remnant Church does not need a doctrine of Original Sin, and for at least eight reasons:

1. If we had needed a doctrine of Original Sin, God would not have waited until 1978 to make that known to us.
2. The doctrine of Original Sin impugns the character of God by making Him an unjust and tyrannical judge.
3. The doctrine of Original Sin requires a doctrine of Immaculate Conception, which destroys the humanity of Christ.
4. The doctrine of Original Sin pictures Christ as having enormous advantages over us in meeting temptation, so that it could not be true that He was in all points tempted as we are, as the Bible says He was.
5. The doctrine of Original Sin firmly rules out any possibility of complete victory over sin in this life.
6. The doctrine of Original Sin cancels out the idea that man can obey the Law that God commands him to obey. Trying to do it is a waste of time, for it cannot be done.
7. The doctrine of Original Sin is not truly Biblical
8. The doctrine of Original Sin is in violent conflict with the inspired counsels to the Remnant Church that we call the Spirit of Prophecy.

So who needs the doctrine of Original Sin? The devil does; the Remnant Church does not.

Now, let us fasten our minds on some promises, in closing:

We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity.'- 7 Bible Commentary, page 943.

"By His perfect obedience, He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity with Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His Righteousness."-Christ's Object Lessons, page 312.

"And if we consent. He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that while obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find Its highest delight In doing His service.-- Desire of Ages, page 666.

"Everyone who by faith obeys God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. When we submit ourselves to Christ we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with His Righteousness."- Signs, July 29, 1902.

"Those who are registered as holy in the books of heaven are not aware of the fact, and are the lass to boast of their own goodness. "-Faith I Live By, page 140.

"When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a Slow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character

of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour."-Christ's Object Lessons, page 420.

"When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ." - Christ's Object Lessons, page 314.

"As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. -Christ's Object Lessons, page 162.

"The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God." -Christ's Object Lessons, page 114.

"The heaven of truth works a change in the whole man."-Christ's Object Lessons, page 102.

"Christ will live in us. His character will be reproduced in our nature."-Christ's Object Lessons, page 60.

"The life of Christ has shown what humanity can do by being partaker of the divine nature. All that Christ received from God, -we, too, may have."-Christ's Object Lessons, page 149.

END OF MY RESPONSE TO MAN'S NATURE.]

### **FINISHING THE REFORMATION-THE EVANGELICAL TRUTH**

"Now let's talk about obedience. When a person first comes to obedience, when a person first comes to Jesus, he is accepted just as he is. True or false? Any conditions put there? Everybody is included. There is no date. Only condition is that we come. It covers all. Anyone who comes to Jesus, he is always accepted just as he is. And why? Because of what Jesus has done at the cross.

" 'Oh,' you say, 'That was good for me when I became an Adventist or a Christian, 20 years ago!' It's still good for you today. We do not change our lives in order to get accepted; we are accepted just as we are; We are told that because of His justifying grace, we stand before God not only forgiven, but we stand before God as though we had never sinned, better than forgiveness, isn't it? Now that is the popular truth of the evangelical world, and it is truth.

"Luther made the start, but the whole thing aborted. The Reformation has yet to be completed. What was his start? The just shall live by faith! And later he wrote in his Bible: 'The just shall live by faith alone,' Well, someone came along some years ago and they said, 'I'll write a book, "By Faith Alone," and x-number of Adventists began to have coronaries.' 3AUC CM.

**[Norval Pease's book, "By Faith Alone," caused quite a stir among historic Adventists back in the 60s because of his emphasis that salvation is solely a result of faith.]**

### **ROMANS SEVEN**

#### **ROMANS 7 IS ABOUT THE CONVERTED CHRISTIAN**

"Romans 7 talks about the frustration of the converted Christian who has not yet learned to depend upon God's strength, and is trying to depend on his own strength. The predominant word in this passage is do, that



which he wants to do, he doesn't do. And that which he doesn't want to do, he does. And right in the middle, verse 18, he says, 'For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.' " FTW, 189,

## THE WILL CAN'T DO IT-BEFORE OR AFTER

" 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not. (Romans, 7:15-19). Paul knew how to will or to choose the right thing, but he couldn't carry through in practice. Evidently he suffered defeat and failure in his Christian life. He says, 'What's wrong? I will to do, but I can't perform: Of course, some will argue that Paul speaks of his life before initial conversion, when he first came to Christ, but is there any difference in the operation of the will pre- and post-conversion? So although I am taking the position that Paul describes a converted person's frustrations, the same principles would apply to the operation of the pre-conversion will. The will would function the same in justification as in sanctification.'" SBF, 23.

## [MY RESPONSE TO ROMANS 7]

[The deciding factors of who the man of Romans 7 is are found in verses 24 and 25.

That the man of Romans 7 is neither the unregenerate rebel against God, nor yet the converted, regenerate Christian, but is the man "under law," the *Jew* who wants to do God's will but does not accept Christ; just such a man as Paul was before his experience on the Damascus road. Paul can write about this man as "I" with precise accuracy, because he is describing such an experience as he himself had before he knew Christ. Although it does not describe his present experience, he empathizes and identifies himself with this man and his predicament. A look at 7:24 and 7:25 will prove my position.

◀ Romans 7:25 ▶													
Romans 7 Interlinear													
5485 [e]	1101 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]	1223 [e]	2424 [e]	5547 [e]	3588 [e]	2962 [e]	1473 [e]	696 [e]	3787 [e]	846 [e]	1473 [e]
charis	de	to	Theo	dia	Iēsou	Christou	tou	Kyriou	hēmōn	ara	oun	autos	ego
25 χάρις	[δὲ]	τῷ	Θεῷ	, διὰ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	τοῦ	Κυρίου	ἡμῶν	!	ἄρα	οὖν	, αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ,
Thanks [be]	moreover	to	God	through	Jesus	Christ	the	Lord	of us	then	So	myself	I
N-NFS	Conj	Art-DMS	N-DMS	Prep	N-GMS	N-GMS	Art-GMS	N-GMS	PPro-G1P	Conj	Conj	PPro-AMIS	PPro-NIS
3888 [e]	3303 [e]	3503 [e]	1398 [e]	3551 [e]	2316 [e]	3588 [e]	1181 [e]	4561 [e]	3551 [e]	286 [e]			
to	men	noi	douleuō	nomō	Theou	te	de	sarki	nomō	hamartias			
τῷ	μὲν	νοῖ	δουλεύω	νόμῳ	Θεοῦ	; τῇ	δὲ	σαρκὶ	, νόμῳ	ἁμαρτίας			
with the	indeed	mind	serve	law	God's	-	but [with]	[the] flesh	[the] law	of sin			
Art-DMS	Conj	N-DMS	V-PA-1S	N-DMS	N-GMS	Art-DFS	Conj	N-DFS	N-DMS	N-GFS			

Let us begin with the subject of the sentence, the two words *I myself*. The two Greek words are *ego autos*. The first word, *ego*, means simply I. But what about *autos*? It means, emphatically, *I alone*. In the context of Romans 7 it means *I without Christ*. Paul is saying:

*I alone, without Christ, with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

This harmonizes perfectly with the view that in the entire chapter he is describing the experience of the man who is not a rebel against God, but is trying to do God's will while rejecting Christ.

*I, on my own resources, I without Christ, I alone, with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

This is emphatically not the experience of the regenerate man, the Christian who does all things in the spiritual realm in and with and through the power of Christ.

We now turn to another expression in verse 25, and the two words *so then*:



*So then* with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

The first two words of the sentence in Greek are *ara oun*. Again we establish quickly the meaning of the first word, *ara*, which is simply *therefore*, or *so then*. But what of the word *oun*? Unfortunately, the King James translators did not bother to translate it into English. This may be because the first major usage of this word is identical with that of *ara*: *therefore*, or *so then*. Apparently the translators felt that there was no need to write in English, *therefore therefore*, or *so then, so then*, or even *therefore so then*. One such word is enough.

But what of the Greek? Paul did use *both words*, as we may ascertain by looking at the verse in any Greek New Testament. Paul did not just say *ara*, he said *ara oun*. Are we to suppose that Paul just forgot that he had already used *ara*, so added *oun* by mistake? Or that he actually meant to say *therefore therefore*, or *so then so then*? Neither of these suppositions seems likely. What then?

When a speech has been interrupted by parenthetical clauses *oun* serves to take it up again. — Lidell and Scott lexicon.

Paul is developing a line of thought that begins in Romans 7, verse 7. In this lengthy passage he describes with accuracy and eloquence the frustrations and failures of the man who is "under law:" He is the man who is neither a rebel against God nor yet a born-again Christian, but who is trying to do God's will while refusing the help that can only come from Christ. This is just such a man as Paul himself once had been. And in harmony with the zealous missionary spirit that led him to say,

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law,

Paul identifies himself with this unfortunate man, as if it were his own predicament, as indeed it once had been. His description continues and builds through verses 22 and 23:

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

At this point the intensity of his feelings, combined with his actual personal knowledge of the frustration of the poor man, cause him to burst out in a question and answer which interrupt the line of thought and are parenthetical:

(O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.)

Then, realizing that his line of thought has been interrupted, he advises the reader of this fact, as well as of his intention to return to his line of thought, by using the word *oun*. *Oun* is used to return to a line of thought that has been interrupted. Having taken this precaution, he uses the words that should be unmistakably clear to indicate that he is still talking about the same person who is trying unsuccessfully to do God's will *apart from Christ*: the two words *ego autos*, *I alone*, *thrown on my own resources*.

### **A faithful translation of this last part of verse 25 would look like this:**

So then (to return to my line of thought, which was interrupted), *I alone* with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

We have seen that the proper understanding of Romans 7, that the unfortunate man identified by the first personal pronoun is the man who tries to do God's will while refusing to accept Christ, even as Paul had once done, was held by many early Christian writers and by the Reformation leaders, Arminius and Wesley and by Ellen White.

Here is a typical example of her use of verses from Romans 7:

Sin did not kill the law, but it did kill the carnal mind *in Paul*. "Now we are delivered from the law," he declares, "that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Romans

7:6). "Was that then which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:12). Paul calls the attention of his hearers to the broken law, and shows them wherein they are guilty. He instructs them as a schoolmaster instructs his scholars, and shows them the way back to their loyalty to God.

There is no safety nor repose nor justification in transgression of the law. Man cannot hope to stand innocent before God, and at peace with Him through the merits of Christ, while he continues in sin. He must cease to transgress, and become loyal and true. 2SM pgs. 212-213 (Emphasis mine.)

### CONCLUSION TO ROMANS 7

*Ego autos*, then, *I alone*, is definitely not the secret of success. That which is done through power supplied by God could not be described by the words *ego autos*. The believer who fails to recognize his need of the forgiving and enabling grace of Christ is doomed to frustration and defeat in the Christian life. This is the message of Romans 7. It is a warning message, sounding its clarion call across the centuries, telling us that we must never be found in the attitude of *ego autos*; *I alone*.

### END OF MY RESPONSE TO ROMANS 7.]

## MORE UNUSUAL VIEWPOINTS

Whatever obedience takes place at the end of time will be done in "and" "through" God's people quite apart from their choice.

Sin is not the transgression of the law, it is a broken relationship. Man may not be born in Original Guilt, but he certainly is locked into Original Sin. And this because of utter depravity of his will to render any obedience other than to come and yield to Christ.

God's plan is for man to surrender his power of choice in regard to fighting sin or obeying God, so that he will no longer try to resist the sin or obey His God.

Jesus was not born with our sinful nature, for if He had been, then behavior and the transgression of the law would have been the issue in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Relationship with Christ, irregardless of obedience, is the goal to be reached. We are thus instantly accounted perfect in the sight of God, and if we retain this status, through a daily coming to Christ, we shall continue to be perfect in the sight of God, for we are covered by the Righteousness of Christ, even though we may continue in known and cherished sin till we die or are translated.

Men can and will be saved who cling to known and cherished sin if they will but also cling to Christ as their Righteousness. They are sincerely waiting for Him to remove those sins, so it is now His responsibility to do so. This He will do in His own good time, for He does not always see it best to remove our sins right away. .

There is sin" and there are sins. "Sin" is separation from God. When we come to God and remain with Him, that takes care of "sin," for now the separation is ended (unless we leave Him again, by not continuing our morning worships). Then there are "sins." These are the specific temptations that we give in to and indulge. The only solution here is to leave them all to God to care for. Once you have come to Him, these sins are no longer your responsibility and they need no longer be your concern.

Sin has nothing to do with behavior or obedience. Because of this, we can retain our specific sins with impunity of divine wrath or punishment. Having the relationship, we are now with God, and will be saved.

Perfectionism, the overcoming of all specific sins, is an error and will never take place in this life. But perfection, the perfect regaining of our consistent walk with God may indeed occur.

Jesus was not tempted as we are, and He had decided advantages in resisting sin that we lack.

It is wrong to teach moral standards to children and youth, and then ask them to obey such standards. Such teaching will inevitably lead to discouragement and eventual separation from the Church. This is because the youth cannot obey God's laws any more than the rest of us. No one can intentionally or accidentally obey God.

### THREE THINGS AND TWO

#### ONLY THREE THINGS IN THE RELATIONSHIP,

"How do you develop a relationship [with God]? By communication. How can you communicate with God? Through His Word, the way He talks to us, and through prayer, the way we speak to Him. And through going places and doing things with Him, Christian work and service. Through these simple means, relationship can exist, and when we get to know Him, we will trust Him and naturally and spontaneously have faith in Him." OOf, 21.

#### ONLY THREE THINGS IN "STEPS TO CHRIST"

"I bought every book there was on the subject of faith, Jesus, victory, and overcoming sins. There wasn't much written at that time, but I came across a book, 'Steps to Christ,' that seemed small enough so I could get through all of it without too much difficulty. I had read it for a class before, and it had been boring. But this time I determined to read it all the way through and underline everything it told me to do. Much to my surprise, I underlined only three things: Bible study, prayer, and share." MCR, 74.

**[But note such passages as "Steps to Christ," pages 94-95,111,119, and 122.]**

#### ALL THE INTANGIBLES

"One day I got frustrated with the Christian language. There were so many intangibles! 'Give your heart.' 'Reach out and take His hand.' 'Behold the Lamb: 'Fall on the Rock'! So I went through the book, 'Steps to Christ' to find the answers. All these phrases are in the book. I was frustrated. Then I went through the book again to underline all the tangible things I could do. I found only three things: Read the Bible, that I could do. Pray, I could get started. Witness, just for me." 2 AUC CM.

**[What about repentance for sin and turning from it (chapter 3)?**

**What about confessing our sins and putting them away (chapter 4)?**

**What about surrendering and dedicating our lives to Him and using our will to resist sin (chapter 5)?**

**What about reading, believing, obeying and claiming God's Bible promises (chapter 6)?**

**What about earnest, faithful efforts to obey God every day (chapter 7)?**

**What about remaining with Him throughout the day (chapter 8)?**

**What about living to help and bless others (chapter 9)?**

**What about learning about God, not only through the Bible, but through the study of nature (chapter 10)?**

**What about the several requirements for real prayer, such as putting away our sins (chapter 11)?**

**What about the importance of resisting doubt and temptation to sin (chapter 12)?**

**And our personal need to praise God and rejoice in Him daily (chapter 13)?]**

### **ONLY TWO THINGS TO DO**

"In order to have a living experience with Christ, we need to do two things. First, we must go to the cross daily with Jesus in order to give up on ourselves and let Him take over. This involves a daily devotional life in which we take significant time alone at the beginning of every day to seek personal acquaintance with Jesus through His Word and through prayer. And if we will seek God with all our hearts, we'll find Him (Jeremiah 29:13).

"The other thing we need to do in order to continue and grow in this relationship is another form of communication: involvement in the gospel through the Christian witness and service." MCR,104.

### **THE BEGINNING IS THE END-JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION**

#### **NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEGINNING AND LIVING**

"There's no difference between living the Christian life and becoming a Christian. In becoming one I could do nothing except to come to Christ. That was all I could do then, and that's all I can do now in remaining one." SBF, 45.

**[This is a very important point. Many of Venden's comments in his books seem to be directed to people experiencing initial conversion (give up on yourself; only come and He will do the rest; don't try to obey; etc.) But it is important to understand that, to Venden, initial justification may and should be repeated, but beyond that, there is nothing that man need do (with his will or choice) in regard to obedience or resisting sin in his sanctification. God takes care of all that.]**

#### **JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION**

"So the practical reason why theologians want to separate the two [justification and sanctification] at the very beginning is to maintain assurance and keep us from discouragement. That's a valid point. If I mix up becoming righteous with justification on which my assurance is based, then I have no assurance left. But one side in the debate fingers this as the crack in the sidewalk that will eventually become the Grand Canyon. If you separate justification and sanctification at the point of justification, then you have to keep them separate all the way along. The other side says if you put them together at the point of justification, then you have to have them together all the way along..

"I want to take them both. But I am thinking methodology how sanctification and justification work in practical Christianity rather than definitions. I want justification as the basis for my assurance with God, and sanctification as the daily reaffirmation of the assurance, with the spontaneous, resulting changes that occur. Both by faith." TP-1, 11.

#### **SANCTIFICATION SAME AS JUSTIFICATION**

"We accept His mighty gospel as a gift and are thrilled with it, but, the thrill dies out because we fail to see that in walking and fellowshiping with Him we are to work by the same method as when we first came to Him, all by faith. We keep wanting to add something to it, and so it becomes a painful process for us to allow Him to take our burdens, our sins, and our failures. We don't let Him give us the power for obedience that we so sadly lack. We don't realize that He wants to give us victory and overcoming as gifts." TKG, 112.

#### **SALVATION TOTALLY BY BELIEVING AND TRUST**

"Faith in Christ is completely the cause of our Christianity and salvation, while works of obedience are totally the result. If the premise of righteousness by faith is true, then obedience in the Christian life has to be natural.

"But what kind of freedom does it bring? Many kinds. It frees me to be myself, instead of trying to fake it and pretend I'm something that I'm not. If I do not know what it means to be in a surrendered relationship to Jesus Christ, even though I am a member of the Christian church, I am faking it twentyfour hours a day. I'm playing the role, and that's slavery." SBF,46.

### **BY FAITH ALONE-AT CONVERSION AND AFTER**

"Perhaps it is a new thought to some that we live by faith, as well as come to God by faith initially. Obedience is by faith, plus or minus nothing else. Obedience is by faith alone." FTW,159.

### **THE BREAKTHROUGH-NOTHING IN SANCTIFICATION EITHER**

"One of the major breakthroughs in understanding how to live the Christian life is to learn how the will operates in sanctification. Many people accept the premise that justification is by faith alone, but find it hard to turn loose of the idea that there is something we can do to save ourselves in the process of sanctification. Some consider it dangerous to give up the idea that the method of living the Christian life is by faith plus works. The problem is that if we do not understand how to use the will properly, we are likely to use it improperly. That's where the danger is. If we put our effort and our willpower toward that which is impossible for us to do, then we will end in defeat. If we don't understand properly how our will and human effort operates in living the Christian life, the devil is going to have a ready-made method of discouraging us, and short-circuiting the whole relationship with God. We will lose the assurance that we gained when we first accepted Christ, because we will not understand how to maintain that assurance by keeping our attention directed away from ourselves to Jesus. Genuine faith and trust in His merits is our only hope at the beginning and all through the Christian life." FTW, 188. .

### **SANCTIFICATION IS THE RELATIONSHIP**

"Righteousness by relationship obviously covers sanctification. Because, as I understand it, sanctification is the continuation of that relationship. A continuing acceptance of justification on a daily basis." TTI-2, 11.

### **BY FAITH ALONE-FROM START TO FINISH**

"The method by which we live the Christian life is the same method by which we began it, by faith alone. Our justification is by faith alone, our acceptance with God is based totally on our receiving the merits of Jesus in our behalf. And we are to live by faith, as well.

"One of the first reasons why obedience has to come by faith only is because of the nature of sin and sinners. We are all sinners, whether we have ever done anything 'wrong' or not. It is not sinning that makes us sinners. It is getting born that makes us sinners." FTW, 161.

### **GIFTS THAT FELLOWSHIP ALONE RECEIVES**

"Justification is experienced when we get with Jesus in the first place, sanctification is experienced as we stay with Jesus, and glorification will take place as we go with Jesus when He comes again. All three are included in salvation, and all come as gifts from Jesus, as we continue the faith relationship with Him." FTW, 191.

### **BY FAITH BECAUSE WE ARE SINNERS**

"This is the big issue: Surrender is of self. This is the hardest battle. It is a tough one. And if we have to give up on ourselves, because we are born sinners, then there is only one way we can live, and that's by faith alone! Does not that make sense?" 3 AUC CM.

### **NOTHING TO WORK ON**

"Can we ever work for, or earn, God's grace, whether to atone for our past sins or to receive power to overcome our present sinning? The answer is No. Sanctification is as much a gift of God as is justification. Genuine obedience and victory in the Christian life is natural and spontaneous; obedience is the fruit of faith. A person doesn't labor on fruit, fruit is the result." SAS, 6.

### **SANCTIFICATION IS ALSO GOD'S WORK**

"Our part in continuing salvation is to abide in Him. We are not able to save ourselves, but Christ fights our battles for us and gives us the victory. Sanctification is also God's work." MCR, 126,127.

### **BY FAITH ALONE-OBEDIENCE AND FORGIVENESS**

"It is good news to learn that obedience is by faith alone, just as forgiveness is by faith alone." TKG, 96.

### **NO FURTHER PART IN THE CONTRACT**

"That's all that man can do. He can trust and depend on God. After he has received Christ as his personal Saviour and continues to accept Him, believing through personal communication each day that God is able, he has done his part of the contract. That's what some people would call the ultimate heresy in salvation by faith, but believe it is the truth. Only one thing can we do to be saved from our sins and to keep saved in the ongoing Christian life. It is the only thing that so many of us have not done and that is spending time alone with Christ at the beginning of every day for continual fellowship, communication, and communion throughout the day. That's all we can do." SBF, 66, 67.

### **REASONS WHY OBEDIENCE "BY FAITH ALONE"**

"Now I'd like to list briefly eight Bible reasons why obedience can come by faith alone and not by your own efforts.

1. Because the Bible says so. Is that a good enough argument?
2. Obedience can come by faith alone because of the nature of mankind.
3. Obedience can come by faith alone because of the nature of surrender. If we have given up on our own ability, then we must depend upon the power of Another. It is impossible to be trying hard to obey, and give up on ever being able to obey, both at the same time. Giving up negates the possibility of trying hard to accomplish. When we give up, or surrender, we are placing ourselves in total dependence upon God.
4. Obedience comes by faith alone because of the fact that God wants us to be controlled by Him.
5. Obedience can come by faith alone because of the nature of repentance. Repentance is not our own work, but a gift.
6. Obedience comes by faith alone because of the fact that obedience is the fruit of faith.
7. Obedience comes by faith alone because of Jesus' mighty example.



8. Obedience can come by faith alone because of the fact that we are offered rest in living the Christian life, as well as rest from the guilt of sin. All of us in every generation have struggled with the burden of holiness. And at times there's not much difference between the burden of holiness and the burden of sin." TKG, 97-99.

### **"BY FAITH" MEANS WE ARE OUT OF IT**

"Obedience can be only by faith, because God invites us to give up on ourselves, to hand over our power of choice to Him. We have to use our power of choice to give it up! How can that be? God asks us to surrender our power of choice toward everything except continuing the relationship with Him. We turn over our power of choice in terms of fighting sin and the devil.

"Suppose you have a problem smoking. The Lord declares that if you will surrender your power of choice toward everything except your relationship with Him, He will bring a complete change in your life. But then you hear, 'Choose not to smoke.' What do you do? Are you going to find victory by deciding not to smoke? No. Instead, hand over your power of choice on smoking. Exercise it toward the faith relationship exclusively!" OOF, 40.

**[This is a very clear statement of Venden's position on "obedience by faith."]**

### **WAIT IN FAITH FOR THE FRUIT TO APPEAR**

"We can live in this world the Christian life only by faith, and by faith only, because of the nature of the fruit. Fruit is completely the results of abiding in Christ, and the faith relationship is the cause. This in itself is an indication that we can live only by faith." 3 AUC CM.

**[MY RESPONSE TO FAITH ALONE]** [ Although the word sanctification is not mentioned very often by Venden, it should be realized that the concepts that are presented are part of what is referred to in other books by the same author as sanctification by faith alone. We are told on MCR page 165 that "growth in the process of sanctification is in the constancy of my surrender to His control of love." This is to say that a new Christian may be surrendered very little of the time, but as he grows, somewhere down the line he will eventually reach maturity when he becomes surrendered 100% of the time.

**This position is a total distortion of truth.** As already discussed earlier in this review, God requires of the soul total, or 100%, surrender before justification (that's a word meaning the same thing as conversion, and forgiveness) can take place, and in order to retain justification, the surrender must be maintained. God does not lessen the requirement after the initial conversion takes place, it remains the same. (RH Vol. 1, 1890).

To be converted is to be 100% surrendered and that means living up to all the light a person has received. The commission of a known sin shows a person to be unconverted. Growth consists of receiving and putting into practice new light, new duties, of comparing our lives with the life of Christ and seeing defects we hadn't realized before, and through the strength and power of Christ gaining the victory over the defects. It is the Holy Spirit's work to bring these things to our attention. If we are maintaining 100% surrender, then at each step as we see what is required of us we immediately accept it and commence our effort to put it into practice with no quibbling or protest; there is no rebellion. Growth is a cooperative work of the Holy Spirit bringing conviction upon different points and our response in endeavoring to practice what the Holy Spirit points out. We stand perfect in God's eyes as long as we are 100% surrendered, and yet we are growing in our performance. This is how we can be perfect at every stage of growth and still not be fully mature. The Holy Spirit is in charge of our growth because He is the One responsible for revealing to us God's will for us. And we are responsible for our growth because we choose whether we will yield to God's claims as they are unfolded to us.

The real meaning of sanctification cannot be correctly understood except in the context of self-denial and efforts to overcome sin, as seen in the light of God's law. **The term Sanctification by Faith Alone contains an incongruous use of words. First, sanctification is not by faith alone (See GC chapter on Modern**

**Revivals). Second sanctification is by obedience, as is abundantly shown in the statements below. These concepts of sanctification by faith alone are contrary to the historic understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.**

**ST May 19 1890** "Obedience to the law of God is sanctification....

Sanctification is not an instantaneous but a progressive work." "True sanctification is nothing more or less than to love God with all the heart, to walk in His commandments and ordinances blameless."

**RH Mar. 18, 1881** "Sanctification is obtained only in obedience to the will of God." "Every transgressor of God's law is a sinner, and none can be sanctified while living in known sin." "The sinner cannot be convinced of his guilt unless he understands what constitutes sin. It is impossible for an individual to experience Bible sanctification while he holds that if he believes in Christ it is immaterial whether he obeys God's law or disobeys it."

**Psalms 66:18** "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,"

**Proverbs 28:9** "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."

**ST Feb. 10, 1888** "Sanctification is not the work of an hour, it is the result of the constant effort of a lifetime. We must fight the good fight of faith, struggle against the powers of darkness, resist evil, subdue the natural tendencies to sin, and by the grace of God perfect holiness, and work out our own salvation."

**COL 360** "Through the right use of our talents, we may link ourselves by a golden chain to the higher world. This is true sanctification; for sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God."

**3 SM 204** "Entire conformity to the will of our Father which is in heaven is alone sanctification, and the will of God is expressed in His holy law. The keeping of all the commandments of God is sanctification. Proving yourselves obedient children to God's Word is sanctification,"

**MLT 250** "There is no genuine sanctification except through obedience to the truth." "Through obedience comes sanctification of body, soul, and spirit. This sanctification is a progressive work, and an advance from one stage of perfection to another."

**MLT 249** "... Bible sanctification ... is truth received in the heart and practically carried out in the life."

**RH Oct. 7, 1908** "Sanctification is the work, not of a day or of a year but of a lifetime. The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor's crown. Paul's sanctification was the result of a constant conflict with self. He said, 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did God's will, however crucifying to his own nature... It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan."

**Signs of the Times, June 16, 1890** "*When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment*"

**"When it is in the heart to obey" refers not to a mere desire to be good but to the exercise of the will to obey. Loyalty is the litmus test of true faith that God accounts for righteousness.** That He accepts heart commitment alone as true obedience both warns us against judging others (Matt. 7:1) and demands heart-searching on our part.

The illustration that is used to show what sanctification is like (MCR pages 167-168) should raise a warning signal to the reader if nothing else in the book was discerned. This 'sample' of sanctification teaches that victory over temptation comes in having the temptation removed instantaneously, so that it can't even be remembered. It is perhaps not without significance that at the same moment there was experienced the cold shiver like an electric shock." We should be reminded that we will have to meet those in the future who are certain that they are serving the Lord, because they have had experiences where they felt "electric shock" shivers also. They will be convinced that this is evidence from the Lord, and they too will feel that obedience or disobedience is immaterial because they believe that "fellowship with Christ" is the sum total of the Christian life.

**God's plan is not to free us from temptation in order for us to escape yielding to it, but rather to give us strength to resist it. It is by successfully resisting the smaller temptations that we are strengthened to resist the bigger ones down the road. END MY RESPONSE TO FAITH ALONE]**

## THE FINISHED WORK

### THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST AT THE CROSS

"Not long ago I was discussing with one of my neighbors the finished work of Christ at the cross and how our salvation and our eternal life is assured because of the sacrifice of Jesus. Then he asked, 'So what is the purpose of sanctification? What purpose is fulfilled by living the Christian life?' "Well what is the purpose of fruit? It is for the glory and praise of God.' " TKG,108-109.

### OUR SUBSTITUTE DELIVERS US FROM LIVING

"Watchman Nee in his book 'Not I, But Christ' (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1974) has said it rather emphatically but truly nonetheless. It sounds shocking at first, and I am going to presume to quote excerpts from one chapter. See if it fits your case in any sense concerning the break from slavery to the search for freedom. He says that the way to freedom lies in the substitutionary life of Christ, that Christ became our substitute, not only dying in our place, but living in our place.

" 'At the beginning of our Christian life, we saw how the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that by His death we were delivered from death, our sins were forgiven, and we were condemned no more. Today Paul tells me that because Christ lives in me, I am delivered from living (pp. 110, 111)." SBF, 38,39.

**[MY RESPONSE TO THE CROSS]** [We are rightly encouraged to contemplate the cross of Christ by Venden, but the real meaning of the cross is effectively obscured by the concepts he presents. To discern the real meaning of the cross is to unmask the most subtle and devastating impact of his whole teachings.

The real reason that many will be lost and comparatively few saved is not because many are trying to put effort into obedience (as implied on MCR page 8), but rather because they shun the cross!

Read carefully the following statement:

**ST Feb. 16, 1882** "Still there is urged against it (Bible Christianity) one objection which our ablest ministers cannot remove. Christ Himself could not remove it. It has effectually barred the way of life to thousands. This hindrance is the cross. The cross, covered with shame and reproach, which Jesus bore for us, stands directly in the Christian path. To evade that cross, the selfish, the world-loving, and the pleasure seeking turn from the light that would guide their feet to Heaven. They choose doubt, unbelief, and infidelity, that they may have the pleasure of following inclination, and giving loose rein to the promptings of the carnal heart."

"Those who accept and obey the truth, must deny self, bear the cross daily, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God ...' Therefore, there is a constant warfare between inclination and duty. Inclination too often prevails, and silences the convictions of the Holy Spirit."

Let us go through this, carefully noting some key phrases, and analyzing them as we look at them again. "The cross stands directly in the Christian's path." This means that he must face this cross directly and deal with it in some way. The next sentence shows that some deal with it by evading it--that is, to side step or avoid it, to turn away from it. "To evade that cross, the selfish, the world-loving, and the pleasure seeking turn away from the light that would guide their feet to Heaven." Notice that the first step in evading the cross is to turn from the light. To turn from the light is to refuse to practice it; it is to refuse to make a practical application of the light in the life. This turning from the cross can take place at every point where increased light points out our duty, or where temptation seeks to persuade us to deviate from the path of duty. Notice what the evidence is that shows one to be evading the cross: "They choose doubt (that is, they don't believe, or accept, that the light applies to them), unbelief, and infidelity, that they may have the pleasure of following inclination, and giving loose rein to the promptings of the carnal heart."

To evade the cross, then, is to follow the promptings and inclinations natural to the human heart. If to evade the cross means to follow inclination, what would accepting the cross mean? It means to follow the light, no matter how crucifying to our feelings and inclinations. It means to disregard inclination. Notice how this is so clearly described: "Those who accept and obey the truth, must deny self, bear the cross daily, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Therefore there is a constant warfare between inclination and duty."

To bear the cross means to follow duty when inclination would prompt us to do otherwise; it means to put into practice the light we receive even though it goes against the desires and promptings of our natural heart. This is the principle of self-denial. This is what it means to crucify self.

**2T 651** "Self-denial and the cross lie directly in the pathway of every follower of Christ. The cross is that which crosses the natural affections and the will."

**4T 79** "Only by the cross can the human family be elevated to connect with Heaven. Self-denial and crosses meet us at every step on our Heavenward journey."

**GC 316** "Obedience requires a sacrifice and involves a cross; and this is why so many of the professed followers of Christ refused to receive the light from heaven, and, like the Jews of old, knew not the time of their visitation."

**5T 94** "It is never difficult to do what we love to do; but to take a course directly against our inclinations, is lifting a cross."

**ST Nov. 3, 1887** "The truth of God always involves a cross; but it is of heavenly origin, and elevates the receiver. It has a sanctifying influence on the life, fitting fallen man for the society of angels in the kingdom of glory."

**The cross, where duty crosses inclination, is the very point where the power of God manifests itself in our experience. Jesus said, "Without Me ye can do nothing." But the cross is the point where the power of Jesus goes into action in our experience. It is the power of God's word that is actually producing the result, even though it is done through our faculties-our nerves, our will-power, etc. For this reason it will seem to us like our effort, even though it is God's Power that is accomplishing the result. Our choosing, and putting effort into decidedly acting, opens the door for His power to accomplish the result. This door is found at that point where the cross occurs. That is why the cross is referred to as a channel of power. That is why Paul called it the power of God unto salvation. (Compare Romans 1:16,17; 1 Corinthians 1:17,18, 23, 24; and Galatians 2:20).**

**8T 206** "Those only who realize that the cross is the center of hope for the human family can understand the gospel that Christ taught."

**RH Jan. 28, 1909** "Let no one seek to evade the cross. It is through the cross that we are enabled to overcome. It is through affliction and trial that divine agencies can carry on a work in our lives that will result in the love and peace and kindness of Christ."

The cross is the same thing as the yoke that Jesus spoke of in Matt. 11:29, 30, and the yoke represents God's law which points out our duty.

**5 BC 1090** "We are to bear the yoke of Christ that we may be placed in complete union with Him. 'Take My yoke upon you,' He says. Obey My requirements. But these requirements may be in direct opposition to the will and purposes of the human agent. What then is to be done? Hear what God says: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' The yoke and the cross are symbols representing the same thing,—the giving up of the will to God. Wearing the yoke unites finite man in companionship with the dearly beloved Son of God. Lifting the cross cuts away self from the soul, and places man where he learns how to bear Christ's burdens. We cannot follow Christ without wearing His yoke, without lifting the cross and bearing it after Him."

It is at the cross where we first meet Jesus Christ. As we 'see' Him we come to the realization that it is for our salvation that He consented to bear the cross. And we come to realize that in order to avail ourselves of the salvation offered, that there is a cross for us to bear also (Matt. 10:38; Luke 9:23). We realize that it is at the cross that we find power for salvation and overcoming sin. We must begin each day by coming to the cross. It is at the cross that we find that ourselves must be crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), in order that we might utilize the power that He is offering. We must not only come to the cross at the beginning of each day, but we must stay at the cross all through the day. In each situation we must ask where the cross is to be found. And it is precisely there—at the cross—that we find Jesus and His power. We can only have His help in each situation by being with Him on the cross, for it is on the cross that He gives power and we receive power.

As quickly as we shun the cross we are disconnecting ourselves from Christ and our source of power. Jesus is still suffering the anguish of the cross because it is only while He is at the cross that we can be crucified with Him. When He lays down His cross (at the close of His mediation) there will be no more hope for sinners, no more remedy for sin; no more power for overcoming sin will be available.

**The cross is the point where we receive power to overcome temptation. So by teaching us to refrain from putting effort into practicing self-control and self-denial in our actions, the Venden has neatly circumvented the very point where we are to receive power for overcoming, all the while endeavoring to lead us to believe that we are giving the battle over into Jesus hands! END OF MY RESPONSE TO THE CROSS]**

NOTE: ANY REFERENCES NOTED ARE AT THE END OF MAIN DOCUMENT.