

THE TEACHINGS OF MORRIS VENDEN

HARVEST INSPIRATION DISCOVERIES LECTURE SERIES WWW.PRODISCOVERIES.COM

CHAPTER THREE-- SOLVING THE SIN PROBLEM-- NATURE OF SURRENDER

Table of Contents

CHAPTER THREE-- SOLVING THE SIN PROBLEM-- NATURE OF SURRENDER.....	4
<i>THE CROSS SYMBOLIZES THAT WE CAN'T SURRENDER.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>WRONG SURRENDERING</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>HANGING ONTO SOMETHING TO DO.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>THE WRONG ROUTE TO SALVATION</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>NO ABILITY</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>ONLY ONE THING.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>WHAT IS SURRENDER?</i>	<i>5</i>
THE OPPOSITE OF DAILY SURRENDER	5
SURRENDER IS GIVING UP THE IDEA	5
SURRENDERING ON TRYING TO OBEY	5
GIVE UP-WHAT WE GIVE UP WHEN WE SURRENDER	5
GIVE UP ON OVERCOMING BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT.....	6
ONLY ACCEPT-ALL WE DO IS COME	6
MY ONLY CONCERN SHOULD BE	6
<i>[MY RESPONSE TO 'WHAT IS SURRENDER?'].....</i>	<i>6</i>
Notice how surrender is connected with giving up sins in EGW writings:.....	6
HOW SIN IS OVERCOME	7
HOW TO OVERCOME KNOWN SIN	7
STEPS IN OVERCOMING SIN.....	8
NO TEMPTATION SUCCESSFUL IN CHRIST	8
THOSE IN CHRIST NOT SUCCESSFULLY TEMPTED	8
PEACE- NO OBEDIENCE WITHOUT PEACE	8
VICTORY BY PEACE	8

<i>[MY RESPONSE DEALS WITH TEMPTATION]</i>	9
<i>TWO INCOMPATIBLE BELIEFS</i>	11
HOW ARE WE TRANSFORMED.....	11
<i>RIGHTEOUSNESS</i>	11
HOW TO HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS.....	11
JUSTIFICATION THE ONLY BATTLEFRONT.....	11
RIGHTEOUSNESS-NOT RIGHT-DOING BUT A GIFT.....	11
RIGHTEOUS BUT SINNERS.....	12
RIGHTEOUSNESS TRAPS.....	12
OBEDIENCE NEVER PRODUCES RIGHTEOUSNESS.....	12
[MY RESPONSE].....	12
<i>THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE</i>	12
DON'T TRY; IT'S ALREADY WON.....	12
WHERE HUMAN EFFORT IS TOTALLY USELESS.....	13
<i>DELIBERATE EFFORT—WHERE?</i>	13
ALL THE DELIBERATE EFFORT.....	13
ONLY TOWARD FELLOWSHIP.....	13
FIGHTING FOR A CORNER.....	13
ONLY ONE DELIBERATE EFFORT.....	13
<i>CHARACTER</i>	13
CHARACTER-NOT BASED ON BEHAVIOR.....	13
<i>INVOLVEMENT-GETTING INVOLVED IS FIGHTING GOD</i>	13
COOPERATION-MY EFFORT WITH GOD'S POWER BRINGS DEFEAT.....	14
HOW WE ARE TO COOPERATE.....	14
COOPERATE-ONLY BY FINDING HIM.....	14
THE GROWTH PROCESS.....	14
<i>[MY RESPONSE TO COOPERATING WITH GOD IN MY SALVATION]</i>	14
Yet the Bible is just as emphatic that we are to be involved in this work.....	14
Ellen White writes, concerning this truth.....	15

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 THREE-- SOLVING THE SIN PROBLEM-- NATURE OF SURRENDER

THE CROSS SYMBOLIZES THAT WE CAN'T SURRENDER

"He invites us to take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). He uses the cross, the crucifixion, as a symbol to teach us that we cannot, surrender ourselves; we must allow God to do the work for us. And He is willing and able to bring us to the point of surrender if we will allow Him to do so." TKG, 40.

WRONG SURRENDERING

"We can only live by faith, and by faith only, because of our very nature. Surrender. Surrender! Now here is where we come to a major snag. In the Christian religion we have gotten the idea that surrender was surrender of giving up things. So a person gives up His smoking, drinking, and dancing; and only strong people can do that much, and they get the impression that they have surrendered. When if they gave up these things apart from submitting, they gave up these things apart from submitting themselves to Christ, then they did it in their own strength and what they call surrender could be an escape from real surrender. This is the problem of laodicea: a church full of people who have given up things, and thought they had surrendered, when they did it themselves!

"What is real surrender, then? It is giving up the idea that I can do anything at all towards giving up my smoking, drinking, dancing, even if I give up the external manifestation of them, inside I'm still the same. Jesus says that if you push out one devil, and that devil will come back and bring more with him." AUC CM.

[Morris believes that we are only legalists when we try to give up bad habits, because of our inborn nature: We are not able to give up bad things and do right things, so we should not try to do so.]

HANGING ONTO SOMETHING TO DO

"It's very hard to get away from God, but often we will try everything we can, every maneuver and escape, trying to outrun Him. And in all cases, we are really running away from the same thing, self-surrender. We're trying to escape that moment of truth in which we are faced with the realization that we are incapable of handling life and the things of eternity. Our pride and ego make it very difficult for us to give up on ourselves. Our humanistic hearts prefer the 'do-it-yourself' religion in which we rely on our abilities and inner resources. We want to hang onto something that we can do; so we invent all sorts of ways to escape from self-surrender." MCR, 44.

THE WRONG ROUTE TO SALVATION

"There is an even more subtle way to run from God, however, one that we are not always aware of or willing to admit. After we realize our need of God, we may still balk at the idea of self-surrender. So we try to make up our own routes to salvation. We take the initiative in the search, thinking ourselves capable of finding Him.

"Many of us work on behavioral changes, something tangible to do. We analyze ourselves, trying to seek God through self-realization, using the psychological approach without God as its center and without Christ as foremost. We try to give up our sinful practices and habits, our evil associations, our wickedness. If we manage to succeed in modifying our behavior, if we succeed in being good, moral people, then we think we've found God." MCR, 46.

NO ABILITY

"The final step in coming to Christ is the hardest of all, and it is at this point that many of us start running again. We must acknowledge that we have no ability to 'change ourselves.' Although God is running after us, He can't help us until we are at the point of great need." MCR, 48.

ONLY ONE THING

""There are many ideas as to what constitutes coming to Christ, but the truth is that coming to Christ involves nothing more or less than coming to His Word and to prayer. So everything in living the Christian life eventually boils down to one thing, the personal relationship with Christ." MCR, 58, 59.

WHAT IS SURRENDER?

" 'Well,' says someone, 'then what is surrender?' "Surrender means giving up the idea that we can do any thing at all except come to Christ and seek a daily relationship with Him. It means giving up the idea that we can do anything about our sins apart from Christ. Sin is stronger than man's will power, whether he is strong or whether he is weak. It is useless for us to fight it. We must surrender ourselves! That's what Jesus meant when He invited us to 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest;' He was appealing for us to give up the bad fight of sin and take up the good fight of faith instead." MCR, 124.

THE OPPOSITE OF DAILY SURRENDER

"When I determined to surrender my seven sins, I was actually a long way from it. In fact, when I was fighting my faults, weaknesses, and problems, I was doing just the opposite of genuine surrender." MCR, 124.

SURRENDER IS GIVING UP THE IDEA

"I'd like to point out what surrender really is. Surrender is not giving up things. Surrender is giving up the idea that I can do anything at all about things, except one: to come to Christ just as I am. We must surrender ourselves to Him." FTW, 51.

SURRENDERING ON TRYING TO OBEY

"[Story of a woman who finally gave up smoking when she discovered how dangerous it was.] No one ever surrendered to the other side while he still thought he could win the war. Surrender comes only after all hope of winning is gone. The reason why we have not surrendered in the first place, or not stayed surrendered in the second place, is that our legalistic natures keep rising to the top, and we keep hoping that perhaps if we fight a little harder or a little longer, we can win by ourselves. Have you ever come to the end of your rope on a particular problem, turned it over to God, and experienced victory that comes as a gift from Him?" GN, 61.

GIVE UP-WHAT WE GIVE UP WHEN WE SURRENDER

"The word surrender means 'giving up.' What do we give up? We give up on us! We give up on the idea that we can do anything at all about our condition, except one, come to Christ just as we are. And Christ loves to have us come to Him just as we are. In fact, that's the only way we can come. We can never become better through our own efforts. We must come just as we are. The detour that many people take on this step is to try to give up things instead of self. We try to give up our smoking and drinking and gambling. We have the idea that the Christian life is based on how many things one can give up. If surrender means to give up the idea that we can do anything at all apart from Christ, then for the strong person the giving up of things can become a sidetrack for giving up self." TKG, 38.39.

[Yes, we give up self. But in order to remain with Him, we must also give up our sins. Two points here: (1) Venden's use of the concept "surrender" is life-long, not just at the beginning, so (2) he does not believe or teach that it is ever necessary to surrender sin, any sin, in order to remain with Christ through the years ahead. God takes care of that.]

GIVE UP ON OVERCOMING BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT

"We fluctuate back and forth between surrender to God and trying to manage things on our own. What will finally happen is that we will run out of time. For those who are absolutely locked in on the relationship with Christ but who have run out of time in learning how to be overcomers, there is only one alternative left. It's the alternative God has been trying to bring us to all along, it's to give up. Completely. Forever." GN, 61, 62.

ONLY ACCEPT-ALL WE DO IS COME

"We are all invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and all we have to do is accept the invitation. Jesus paid it all, and the friendly arms of the cross still point the way to the heavenly country. When Jesus bowed His head and died on Calvary, He purchased the right to forgive everyone ever born in this world who will accept His forgiveness. We are all invited to the wedding. There is nothing that we can add to what Jesus has already done." JSAP, 9.

MY ONLY CONCERN SHOULD BE

"My only concern is my rejection or acceptance of the plan of salvation that God has provided to answer the sin problem." MCR, 10.

[MY RESPONSE TO 'WHAT IS SURRENDER?'] The idea presented is that surrender consists in giving up the idea, or belief, that we are to put any effort into overcoming sin. Surrender is supposed to mean that we accept the idea that all we can do toward overcoming sin is to come to Christ and seek daily relationship with Him through Bible study and prayer. This is called giving up *self*, in his view.

"True surrender means abandoning our attempts against the waves of sin in our own strength." (page 121). Other statements in the book state a similar idea. The context of these statements is designed to leave the reader with the impression that can be expressed by paraphrasing the statement this way: "True surrender means abandoning all of our attempts to struggle against sin, because we realize that this indicates that we are trying to fight in our own strength alone."

This idea is emphasized repeatedly. The terms "by ourselves", "in our own strength", "without Christ", and similar phrases are interspersed just enough to create the impression that *all* effort to overcome sin, that we might put forth, would be evidence that we are trying to do it ourselves, and hence must be studiously avoided.

"...surrender has primarily to do with self, not sins." (page MCR124). The term surrender actually does refer to surrendering self as stated in the first part of the sentence. But surrender also has to do with *sins*, for to give up self is to give up yielding to the desires of self. To surrender self does not mean that self ceases to exist. It means that we choose to no longer follow its promptings.

Notice how surrender is connected with giving up sins in EGW writings:

6 T 92 "Satan does not want any one to see the necessity of an entire surrender to God. When the soul fails to make this surrender, sin is not forsaken; the appetites and passions are striving for the mastery; temptations confuse the conscience, so that true conversion does not take place."

5 T 43 "'When self is surrendered to God, our eyes will be opened to see the stumbling-stones which our unchristlikeness has placed in the way of others. All these God bids us remove.'"

RH Nov. 4 1890 "God requires entire surrender of the heart before justification can take place."

By what method of reasoning can we possibly conclude that the heart is entirely *surrendered* if there is even one point upon which we choose to go our way, to yield to temptation, when we know it is contrary to God's will? This is simply evidence that we are not surrendered. "God requires certain things of His people; if they say, I will not give up my heart to do this thing, the Lord lets them go on in their supposed wise judgement without heavenly wisdom." (TM 419).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1). "We are either at peace with God or at war. If at war, it is because we are carrying on a rebellion. How do men fight God? By following sinful practices. Any one knowingly indulging in one sinful practice is warring against God." (E.J. Waggoner, in Studies on the Book of Romans Number 7). He is showing that on that point he doesn't yield to God.

MB 92 "If we do not choose to give ourselves fully to God, then we are in darkness. When we make any reserve, we are leaving open a door through which Satan can enter and lead us astray by his temptations.... The prevalence of a sinful desire shows the delusion of the soul. Every indulgence of that desire strengthens the soul's aversion to God."

1 SM 366 "But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place, and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul."

James 4:17 "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

PP 452 "It is a perilous thing to allow an unchristian trait to live in the heart. One cherished sin will, little by little, debase the character, bringing all its nobler powers into subjection to the evil desire. The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, one-neglect of the high claims of duty, breaks down the defenses of the soul and opens the way for Satan to come in and lead us astray."

MB 92 "Let the purpose be sincere and unwavering to discern the truth and to obey it whatever the cost, and you will receive divine enlightenment. Real piety begins when all compromise with sin is at an end."

RH Mar. 8, 1881 "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." END MY RESPONSE TO 'WHAT IS SURRENDER']

HOW SIN IS OVERCOME

HOW TO OVERCOME KNOWN SIN

"Although we will never claim to be without sin, we still have the opportunity available today to overcome known sin; it is possible, it is necessary, it is our privilege, and it is God's purpose for us. How do we go about it then, overcoming known sin? And how long does it take? I suppose that we could join the ranks of the strong person at this point and say, 'Well, if you know it's sin, just quit!' But the weak person says, 'I've tried, and I can't quit.' The strong person replies, 'You could if you were really sincere in wanting to quit.' And thus the weak person is given the additional burden of being considered insincere, as well as sinful. If you follow this through to its logical conclusion, then you don't become involved in an effort to keep from sinning, either. Your attention is not on your behavior, any more than your attention is on trying to make yourself have faith. You look totally to Jesus, in the faith relationship with Him, and the rest comes as a matter of course." ROE, 99,100,101.

STEPS IN OVERCOMING SIN

"1. The first condition for overcoming known sin is to admit and acknowledge the thing to be sin. No one else can do that for me.

2. The second condition for overcoming known sin is to realize our helplessness to do anything at all about it, except for one: give up. Give up what? Give up on ourselves and on any thought that we can do anything about our sin problem at all except come to Jesus, just as we are.

3. The third condition for overcoming known sin is to find out how to engage in the right fight and to fight the battle where the battle is, instead of where the battle isn't. If you are trying to overcome in your own flesh, in your own strength, there's going to be nothing but weakness.

4. The fourth condition for overcoming known sin is to realize that the faith relationship insists on service and outreach.

5. Another major point in the conditions for overcoming known sin is to know that God justifies.

6. Another condition is to know how to abide in Christ, not only to go to Him in the first place and turn over my problems to Him, but to stay there. . It is talking about learning to trust Him power and His strength instead of our own power and strength. We cannot accomplish this, only the Spirit can accomplish it for us.. We cannot rid ourselves of self-dependence. We can only consent for Christ to do the work.

7. In order to experience and understand victory over known sin, we must know God's loving presence, His loving presence.

8. And finally, the last condition for overcoming sin is to realize what sin does to Jesus. " ROE, 101, 102, 103, 106,107,108,109.

NO TEMPTATION SUCCESSFUL IN CHRIST

THOSE IN CHRIST NOT SUCCESSFULLY TEMPTED

"It wouldn't work for Satan to come to one who is abiding in Christ and tempt him to break one of the commandments. Sin is repulsive to the one who is abiding in Christ. So Satan comes instead with whatever will get our attention off Jesus. It is only through abiding in Christ and keeping our eyes fixed upon Him that we have victory." FTW, 204.

[Venden's concept here is that once one has entered a consistent relationship with Christ, temptations no longer have any appeal and he has full, effortless victory over sin. But elsewhere, Morris wavers on this point, and tells us that we may have more temptations and fall more frequently once we are maintaining a regular worship relationship with Christ, and that we must patiently wait for God to come to the point where He sees it best to put away our sins for us.]

PEACE- NO OBEDIENCE WITHOUT PEACE

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace through our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is peace that enables us to even talk about obedience. If we don't have the peace already, it is pointless to talk about obedience. Now there is something else: It is this peace of total acceptance by God, just as we are, that frees us for obedience." S AUC CM.

VICTORY BY PEACE

"We do not get peace by getting victory; we get victory by getting peace. That's a switch. Just the reverse. How many of us have wasted countless years in time and effort trying to get to the place where we can have peace, by obeying good enough, by enough victory, by enough transformation of character." 5 AUC CM.

[MY RESPONSE DEALS WITH TEMPTATION] Venden presents the view that the main issue in temptation is getting us to depend on ourselves and our efforts to overcome sin. (Some examples are found on MCR pages 154, 159, 160, 165, 168). Thus temptation is interpreted to always be an effort by Satan to keep us from Bible study and prayer. With this philosophy, one can explain away the most straight-forward Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy statements that call on us to put effort into what the book terms "the fight of sin" as being a call to Bible study and prayer. This is a built in protection mechanism that is very effective in silencing all opposition to these concepts. This idea means that to do things that we know are sins does not separate us in our relationship with God, for relationship is supposed to consist of Bible study and prayer, of seeking 'fellowship' with God. We are supposed to show that we are depending on Christ to use His effort to overcome sin in our lives, by putting all our effort into the 'faith relationship' and none into resisting temptation when it occurs.

On page MCR pg. 164 it is suggested that if we fail when tempted, it shows that at that moment we weren't depending on Christ; elsewhere we are told that we depend on Christ by putting effort into Bible study and prayer, and refraining from effort in resisting temptation. We are also told that we really gain the victory beforehand when we seek the 'faith relationship'.

Is it possible to gain the victory beforehand, and then suddenly lose it the moment temptation hits? Can a person choose 'dependence' by putting effort into Bible study and prayer (but not at the time that temptation occurs, for it is useless in gaining the victory then according to MCR page 162) and still end up with the evidence of not being in dependence?

This tends to become very confusing, for the logical conclusion that must take place is that dependence is not within the realm of your choice. This issue is met by advising the reader not to look at his behavior. Ideally, then, if the individual is not looking at his behavior, he wouldn't even notice if he failed when temptation came; for as soon as he noticed he would have proved that he was focusing on behavior instead of on Christ. Thus the person who is depending most completely on Christ is rendered totally oblivious to his defects of character.

How contrary to what we are told in the book Steps to Christ, page 64, "The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes..." The position presented in the book is a virtual admission that there is more to depending upon Christ than putting effort into Bible study and prayer, for even though a person has done that there is still a moment by moment dependence to be maintained. Does it involve the will, the power of choice? Or is it something that takes place beyond our control? If it involves our will, then in what way? It must obviously involve more than just saying that we choose to depend on Christ.

How easily is all the confusion cleared up when we realize that our relationship with Christ is based on our choices all through the day. We choose to seek Him and a knowledge of His will, as well as gain strength, as we begin the day with Bible study and prayer. Then at each point where we have a choice to make concerning what we know to be God's will we are either continuing or breaking the relationship with Him. Thus, if we fail when temptation comes, it is because we either failed to seek communion with Christ and gain a knowledge of his will, or we chose to yield to the temptation, rather than resist it. Our relationship with Christ, our union with him, is maintained through the right use of the will at each point through the day where we have a choice to make involving our knowledge of God's will.

This means that a person can choose dependence on Christ at the beginning of the day by putting effort into Bible study and prayer, and he must continue to choose dependence through the day by his effort to conform his life to the light that he has received. If he neglects to resist temptation and sin, he is giving in to Satan's control by the choice he makes, whether he is aware that that's what he is doing or not. It is an utter mystery why the position is maintained that it is safe to put all the effort we can into Bible study and prayer, without it being depending on our own strength, and yet at the same time maintain that any effort put into overcoming sin is evidence of dependence on our own strength. Why is effort in one area different from the effort in another area?

Is it not the same principle in both areas when correctly applied? The real problem occurs when people try to confine their effort to one area or the other, instead of to both.

In the following statements it can be easily seen how the choices we make in what thoughts we cultivate and cherish, and what actions we carry out, all form part of our relationship and connection with Christ.

ST Mar. 23, 1888, "Union with Christ means an unfailing preference for him in every act and thought of our lives."

4T 191 "The constant inquiry should be, is this in accordance with the will of God? Will this please my Redeemer?" Bible religion elevates the reason until Christ is blended with all the thoughts. Every action, every word, and every moment of our lives should bear the impress of our holy faith."

1 SM 235 "Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again.! By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death."

MH 510 "In a moment decisions may be made that fix one's condition forever. One failure to overcome leaves the soul unguarded. One evil habit, if not firmly resisted, will strengthen into chains of steel, binding the whole man."

5 T 46-47 "Every individual, by his own act, either puts Christ from him by refusing to cherish His spirit and follow His example, or he enters into a personal union with Christ by self-renunciation, faith, and obedience."

"After this union is formed, it can be preserved only by continual, earnest, painstaking effort.... Every Christian must stand guard continually, watching every avenue of the soul where Satan might find access. He must pray for divine help, and at the same time resolutely resist every inclination to sin. By courage, by faith, by persevering toil, he can conquer. But let him remember that to gain the victory Christ must abide in him, and he in Christ."

RH July 12, 1887 "Just as soon as we separate ourselves from God by sin, which is transgression of. His law, Satan takes control of our minds."

4 T 346 "When a man is earnestly engaged day by day in overcoming the defects in his character, he is cherishing Christ in his soul-temple; the light of Christ is in him."

TM 440 "To be sons of God means more than many dream of, because they have not been converted. Men are weighed in the balance and found wanting when they are living in the practice of any known sin."

What else can be said except that it is a cause of deep anguish that the concepts that Venden teaches and writes about should have ever been set before our church members as being truth-- even more, the special truth for this time! These concepts are in reality the most cleverly disguised form of false Christianity that has received this degree of publicity and acceptance in Seventh-day Adventism since the Alpha apostasy at the beginning of this century.

Another unfortunate misrepresentation is also presented in connection with the issue of temptation. This occurs by confusing temptation with actual commission of sin.

(Examples are found in MCR on pages 120, 158-160, 162, 167-168). In the illustration cited on page 120, just the temptation in a wrong thought is taken to be sin. This is a most subtle way to discourage people, for as soon as they recognize that they are being tempted Satan is quick to suggest that they have already sinned, and they give up in despair. This inaccurate representation is not true. It is when we cherish and harbor temptation that it becomes sin; it is then that temptation has prevailed. But if we resist it and cry out to God for strength, and yes,

even quote Scripture to aid us in our efforts to resist, it is not sin. Satan can knock all day long, but we have not sinned just by recognizing who it is that is knocking. (And we need to recognize that it is part of the Holy Spirit's work to help us recognize temptation so that we can resist it.) We have not sinned until we open the door (by the action of our will) and let him in. **END OF MY RESPONSE TO TEMPTATION**

TWO INCOMPATIBLE BELIEFS

HOW ARE WE TRANSFORMED

"We are transformed by grace, through the continuing relationship with Christ, not through our own struggles and resolutions and efforts in fighting sin and the devil. For a long time in the Christian faith, many have held two incompatible beliefs: on the one hand, that we can keep God's commandments, that we can overcome, that we can have victory over sin; and on the other hand, that we need God's help." TKG, 96.

[Truth: We are transformed by the relationship, and, by grace working in us to strengthen us to resist temptation and obey.]

Truth: We can keep the commandments of God WITH His help.

Truth: We can overcome sin in His strength, even though He asks that we do our part in the effort to resist and obey.]

RIGHTEOUSNESS

HOW TO HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS

"When we come to understand that we are sinful by nature and what it is that causes sin in the first place, we can better understand the need for knowing God. Righteousness is never an entity in itself. It comes only with Jesus. When I accept Jesus as my Saviour, my Lord, and my Friend, I have all of His righteousness, because His righteousness comes with Him." TKG, 26.

[This is most excellent in regard to coming to Christ and receiving His robe of righteousness. But when linked with Venden's other concept, that having arrived we need never try to obey Him till the day of our death, for God will take care of that, then we find ourselves with a righteousness by relationship apart from any connection with our behavior. And this is what Venden repeatedly teaches.]

JUSTIFICATION THE ONLY BATTLEFRONT

"Christians usually think that there are two battlefronts: the bad fight of sin and the good fight of faith, and we often try to fight both at the same time. Is this what God wants us to do?

"The apostle Paul tells us that 'to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness', Romans 4:4, 5." MCR, 123.

RIGHTEOUSNESS-NOT RIGHT-DOING BUT A GIFT

"Righteousness has to be defined in terms of something more than right doing! I've found only one satisfactory definition for the ultimate of righteousness, and it's found in a person [Christ]. It is a gift that we can only receive when we come to Him. If we seek it apart from Him, we will never find it, for righteousness comes only to those who seek Jesus instead.

"Usually we think that sin, being the opposite of righteousness, is 'wrong doing: but if righteousness is Jesus, then sin becomes separation from Him. Sin is doing or being anything, regardless how good or bad it may be, apart from the faith relationship with Christ." MCR, 125, 1,26.

RIGHTEOUS BUT SINNERS

"Now does the righteousness of Christ make us righteous? Have you heard that one? Are we declared righteous or made righteous? Does it make us righteous? The fact that Jesus was 'made sin for us never made Him a sinner. Now I'll reverse it. The fact that we are made righteous in Him never makes us righteous." 4 AUC CM.

RIGHTEOUSNESS TRAPS

"What is righteousness? We have some stock answers that we like to give. One of them is that righteousness is right doing. That's true. You can find an inspired, statement to that effect. But let's not miss all the rest of them, too. Sometimes we become experts at taking sentences out of context and forgetting the rest. If righteousness is nothing more than right doing, then all you would have to do to become righteous would be to do what's right. Do you see the trap? Someone else says that righteousness is conformity to the will of God. That's true and you can find an inspired statement for that. But there's also a trap there. You can be led, if you're not careful, to the idea that all you have to do is conform to the law of God." FTW, 89.

OBEDIENCE NEVER PRODUCES RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Obedience to the law can never produce righteousness." TP,47.

[MY RESPONSE]

[It's amazing how arrogant he is in thinking that he is the only one who can know the truth about righteousness. He doesn't quote any statements but just says they are a trap. See if this is taken out of context:

Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law. "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (verse 7). Righteousness is defined by the standard of God's holy law, as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai. {RC 274.3}

The so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God is not faith, but presumption. "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). But "faith, if it hath not works, is dead" (James 2:17). Jesus said of Himself before He came to earth, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Reflecting Christ, 274)

Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures. {DA 126.1} END MY RESPONSE]

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

DON'T TRY; IT'S ALREADY WON

" 'But,' you will ask, does not the Bible speak about soldiers, and warfare, and a fight?' Yes, it certainly does. 'Are we not told that we must strive to enter in?' We surely are. 'Well, what then?' Only this, that we

should be sure for what we are fighting, and for what we are to strive, assumed the responsibility of trying to win what He had already won for me. This led me into failure." SBF 109, 110.

WHERE HUMAN EFFORT IS TOTALLY USELESS

"This is one of the most important truths in understanding how to live the Christian life. It is essential to realize where our human effort must be directed, and where our human effort is totally useless. We are told that if we will fight the fight of faith with all our willpower, we will conquer. This fight of faith is the only fight for the Christian spoken of in the Bible. As we direct our energies and efforts toward that, Jesus will fight sin and the devil for us as He has' promised to do." FTW,194.

[Genuine faith always works by love. When you look to Calvary it is not to quiet your soul in the non-performance of duty, not to compose yourself to sleep, but to create faith in Jesus, faith that will work, purifying the soul from the slime of selfishness. When we lay hold of Christ by faith, our work has just begun. Every man has corrupt and sinful habits that must be overcome by vigorous warfare. 6BC1111]

DELIBERATE EFFORT—WHERE?

ALL THE DELIBERATE EFFORT

"I'd like to propose to you that this is where all the deliberate effort in the Christian life must be centered. All of it. I don't spend part of my time and effort on trying to be good and part of it on the relationship with God. I put all my deliberate effort toward spending time with God, and through the experience of faith and dependence upon Him, He does the rest of the work of salvation in me." TKG, 48.

ONLY TOWARD FELLOWSHIP

"So the deliberate effort in the Christian life is always and only toward fellowship with Jesus, toward abiding in the Vine. It is never toward producing the fruits of righteousness." TKG, 107-108..

FIGHTING FOR A CORNER

"Have you ever found that coming to Christ on a daily basis is hard work? It is often that way. You'll have to admit that Paul used the right language when he called it a fight, 'the good fight of faith' (1 Tim. 6:12). It isn't always easy to keep a corner of your day reserved for one-to-one communion with God." TKG,110.

ONLY ONE DELIBERATE EFFORT

"Because true obedience can only result from a faith relationship with Jesus, we channel all our deliberate effort in living the Christian life toward maintaining this relationship." OOF.39.

CHARACTER

CHARACTER-NOT BASED ON BEHAVIOR

"Venden: I have yet to find a clear definition of 'character' by the same author. I've been looking for along time. On the basis of my study of her [E.G. White's] writings, my understanding of perfection of character has to be in terms of relationship, rather than behavior." TTI-1. 7-8.

INVOLVEMENT-GETTING INVOLVED IS FIGHTING GOD

"There are two ways to fight God. One way is to say, 'I don't believe in God. I have no use for Him, no time for Him.' So I don't go to Him. There is a more subtle way that is just as effective. That is to go to 'God with the thought that God helps those who help themselves. I take my problems to Him, but I don't leave them with Him. Instead I get myself mixed up in the whole situation. I come to God and I say, 'Now, God, I'd like to have You do this and this for me.' But then I get myself all mixed up in the operation. I'm trying to do part of it

and trying to let God do part of it, and in this confusion, the mixing of my own efforts with God's power, comes defeat." FTW, 52.

COOPERATION-MY EFFORT WITH GOD'S POWER BRINGS DEFEAT

"I come to God and I say, 'Now, God, I'd like to have You do this and this for me.' But then I get myself all mixed up in the operation. I'm trying to do part of it and trying to let God do part of it. and in this confusion, the mixing of my own efforts with God's power, comes defeat." FTW, 52.

HOW WE ARE TO COOPERATE

"How much is nothing? It's nothing! It's not 50 percent: or 10 percent or even 1 percent. It's zero. There is no such thing as the subsidy form of salvation. You may say, 'But man is supposed to cooperate with God in living the Christian life: Yes, but not in the way some of us have understood. The cooperation is in admitting that by our own efforts we can't overcome sin and obey God and in casting ourselves in helplessness at His feet. The cooperation is in giving up on ourselves, that is, on our self-sufficiency and self-effort. The cooperation is in realizing that apart from Him we can do nothing, in coming to Christ to let Him take control of our lives and in trusting Him to do a work in us through the Holy Spirit that we could never do for ourselves. That is where the cooperation is!" RET, 52.

COOPERATE-ONLY BY FINDING HIM

'But,' someone says, 'isn't this kind of cooperation rather passive? Aren't we talking here about sort of sitting back in our rocking chairs and watching Christ do all the work?'

"Every once in a while someone gets the idea, when we talk about living the Christian life, that we are proposing an effortless religion. And I'd like to clearly go on record as being opposed to the idea of a passive, effortless religion. There is human effort involved in this cooperation between God and man in overcoming sin and living a Christ like life. But notice, if you will, the direction of that effort.

"First of all, it takes effort for me to come to Christ, to seek His presence and power in my life. The devil doesn't worry about me as long as he sees me struggling along on my own, making great efforts against sin and toward righteousness. But when he sees me making efforts to connect with the only real Source of power, he does everything he can to discourage or divert me. So it takes real effort on my part, because of this determined opposition, to seek God on a continuing basis. And the proof that I don't have the real thing is when I have to force myself to obey. So there is human effort involved in this work of cooperation with God. But my effort is not toward trying to make myself good enough to save. If I am trying to work my way to heaven by my good deeds, my performance, my behavior, then I am still trying to save myself. The only person who gives glory to God in the work of the gospel is the one who depends upon Jesus for all aspects of salvation. ' RET, 52,54,55.

THE GROWTH PROCESS

"So it's a process of growth. It doesn't happen overnight. But as we move more and more constantly into the stance of surrender, of total abandonment of ourselves and our own ability, as we learn to distrust self and trust in Him, we will obey naturally and spontaneously because we have given up on our own abilities, and are relying on Him, who lives His life in us." OOF, 44, 45.

[MY RESPONSE TO COOPERATING WITH GOD IN MY SALVATION]

[Again we note some of his insistence: "Even if I go so far as to say, 'Well, God is going to have to help me,' as long as I rely on myself to do any part of it, my end product is going to be, to any extent that I am involved, filthy rags".

Yet the Bible is just as emphatic that we are to be involved in this work.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

PESHITTA-Phil. 2:12-13, 12 From now on, my beloved, just as you have always been obedient, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with reverence and trembling. 13 For it is God who inspires you with the will to do the good things which you desire to do.

Elsewhere Paul makes it clear that this working out of our salvation is not simply our letting God do the work, but is in fact our active cooperation with God's work. Writing in the next epistle of "this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), and of his goal to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (verse 28), he declares concerning his own life: "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily" (verse 29).

Ellen White writes, concerning this truth

No wonder Ellen White writes, concerning this truth: "Man is to work out that which God works in."¹⁸ Elsewhere Ellen White speaks even more clearly that the work of overcoming is not to be left entirely to Jesus, as some claim:

"Man must work with his human power aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. . . . This could not be the case if Christ alone did all the overcoming. Man must do his part; he must be victor on his own account." {AG 254.2}

Will man take hold of divine power, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given him example in His conflict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan's artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. And then, through the victory that it is his privilege to gain by the all-powerful name of Jesus, he may become an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ. This could not be the case if Christ alone did all the overcoming. Man must do his part; he must be victor on his own account, through the strength and grace that Christ gives him. Man must be a co-worker with Christ in the labor of overcoming. {AG 254.2}

The victims of evil habit must be aroused to the necessity of making an effort for themselves. Others may put forth the most earnest endeavor to uplift them, the grace of God may be freely offered, Christ may entreat, His angels may minister; but all will be in vain unless they themselves are roused to fight the battle in their own behalf. . . . {AG 254.3}

To understand this matter aright, we must remember that our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable, of ourselves, to pursue a right course. It is only by the grace of God, combined with the most earnest efforts on our part, that we can gain the victory. . . . {AG 258.4}

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. **1 Corinthians 10:13.**

This is an extremely important topic. We are here discussing the principle of Divine-human cooperation in the resistance of sin and obedience to His Laws. "Cooperation" is a very strategic point in the Spirit of Prophecy. Over the years I have been personally awed by the emphasis she places upon it. We are to actively

cooperate with God in the work of coming to Him, fighting temptation, obeying His standards and laws, helping others, and witnessing for Him. But Venden declares that we are only to "cooperate" with Him in the act of coming to Him and witnessing for Him and in nothing else. Anything else than surrender is termed "getting myself all mixed up in" God's work to remove sin from my life apart from my willpower or personal choices.**END MY RESPONSE TO COOPERATING WITH GOD FOR MY SALVATION]**

NOTE:Any references noted will be found in main document.