

THE TEACHINGS OF MORRIS VENDEN

Harvest Inspiration Discoveries Lecture Series

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For your convenience some of the conclusions and summaries are presented first. There are also my responses after certain sections. You can see which ones in the table of contents. I may not have a response after every item but that item will be covered in one of the other responses.

An in-depts analysis of what Morris Venden believes, teaches in his books and articles. Here are some examples of what you will find here.

We are not sinful because we sin /
Sin is not doing bad things /
Both right and wrong can be sin /
Jesus had Adam's sinless nature /
We have original sin /
The will has nothing to do with salvation-before or after conversion /
Sanctification is the same as justification/
Do not try to please God /
You were saved at the cross /
Resisting Satan makes us like him /
Resisting sin cheapens grace/
Do not claim Bible promises /
Prayer does not work /
We often live worse when we pray /
Danger of teaching children good habits /
Forget rules, regulations, and laws /
It is wrong to teach moral standards to children and youth/
Don't try to give up smoking and drinking /
The third angel's message is rest from trying to obey /
The beast of Revelation is self worship /
The image of the beast is righteousness by resolution /
We will be sinning till Jesus comes - and lots more!

In October 1997, Lonnie Melashenko brought Morris Venden on the Voice of Prophecy staff as an "Associate Speaker." This is astounding! Page 1 of the VOP announcement said this:

Morris Venden, Associate Speaker bringing Jesus and the Adventist gospel of righteousness by faith to the airwaves, at the Voice of Prophecy speaking appointments, through books and his global cassette ministry.
"- Voice of Prophecy announcement sheet, October 1997.

Venden's "gospel of righteousness by faith" is remarkably full of error.

"Many possess talents which would accomplish much good if sanctified and used In the cause of Christ, or much harm if employed In the service of unbelief and Satan. The gratification of self and its various lusts will pervert the talents and make them a curse Instead of a blessing. Satan, the arch-deceiver, possesses wonderful talents. He was once an exalted angel, next to Christ. He fell through self-exaltation, and created a rebellion in heaven, and caused many to fall with him. Then his talents and skill were employed against the

government of God, to cause all whom he could control to despise the authority of heaven. Those who are charmed with his satanic majesty may choose to imitate this fallen general and share with him his fate at last.

Purity of life imparts refinement, which will lead those possessing it to shrink more and more from coarseness and indulgence in sin. Such will not be led away from the truth or be given up to doubt the inspiration of the Word of God. On the contrary, they will engage in the study of the sacred Word with ever increasing interest, and the evidences of Christianity and inspiration will stamp their impress on the mind and life. Those who love sin will turn away from the Bible, and will love to doubt, and will become reckless in principle. They will receive and advocate false theories. Such will ascribe man's sins to his circumstances, and when he commits some great sin they make him a subject of pity. Instead of looking upon him as a criminal to be punished. This will always suit a depraved heart, which in course of time will develop the principles of fallen nature. By some general process, men abolish sin at once to avoid the unpleasant necessity of individual reformation and exertion. In order to free themselves from the obligation of present effort, many are ready to declare of no account all the labor and effort of their lives while following the sacred principles of God's Word. Elder Hull's philosophical necessity has its stronghold in the corruptions of the heart. God is raising up men to go forth to labor in the harvest field, and if they are humble, devoted, and godly, they will take the crowns which those ministers lose who concerning the faith are reprobate." 1 Testimonies, 440-441

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INTRODUCTION – A SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES

I-A TIME FOR TRUTH

Here are some eternal truths that stand out in contra-distinction to the teachings of Morris Venden:

1- God, by His Holy Spirit, moves upon men to do kindly, unselfish acts, even before they are converted. And the good and right things that they choose to do after conversion are also prompted by the Spirit of God.

2-Every unselfish thought, word and act of men, when done for a worthy objective, is pleasing to God.

3-Sin is always offensive to God. He cannot countenance intentional ("known") sin, nor can He cover the individual with his Righteousness who is indulging cherished sin.

4-Men cannot be saved while retaining or clinging to known or cherished sins.

5-Sanctification is based on daily re-conversions (renewed justifications), but it also includes more than Justification.

6-Sanctification also includes self-control and obedience through the enabling grace of Christ. This is done through a strengthening of the human will by the Holy Spirit, moment by moment, as we depend upon God for strength and help. That which we could not do outside of Christ, we can now do in Christ and this is to conscientiously resist the wrong and choose the right, even though it may be painful to thus choose a better way. This choosing the right and refusing to do the wrong is a distinct act of our choice, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that it can be carried through to successful completion.

7-Before we chose Christ, our will was in slavery to Satan and sin. But in accepting Christ and remaining with Him our wills are set free from that bondage. In Christ, we are now perfectly free to choose that which we shall do. We can choose to remain with Christ and do the right. And we are free at any moment to leave Him for the indulgence of selfishness and sin, and with that choice, a temporary or permanent return to bondage, if that is what we desire. But in our bondage, be it long or short, we can again cry to Christ for release (deliverance). The freedom of the will to choose sin or right living is pivotal in the entire experience of the Christian. Not understanding the freedom of the will, and thus not forcefully exercising it in the right direction can result in eternal ruin.

8-It is never wrong to obey God or to try to do so. Every effort to obey God will benefit and help the individual himself, and those around him. It matters not whether he be a Christian or a worldling.

9-If you know of anyone who is trying to do the right, please do nothing to discourage him. And you do well not to make fun of such people behind their backs. It were better that a millstone were hung around your neck, than that you thus cause one of these little ones to stumble.

For the angels of God are continually seeking to guide these precious souls toward the hand of Jesus. Do not ridicule the righteous and do not mock right doing. And, please, do not excuse sin and wrong doing as though it were acceptable in God's plan to save men. And never hint that God desires anyone to remain in his sins for even an extra moment. Sin is a terrible tragedy, a state of rebellion, that God wants every soul to leave at once, by fleeing to Christ for overcoming strength. While it is called today, come to yourself and return to your wonderful Father, that He may forgive and heal, hold and empower you to henceforth live a clean life.

10-And, please, do not tell people that claiming Bible promises, quoting Scripture, singing songs to Jesus, studying God's Word, and asking Jesus for help are "gimmicks" that are worthless in resisting and overcoming sin!

11-A final generation will keep the commandments of God but it will be done by an act of their own free wills, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Strength of will to do good is a noble quality. Never ridicule it as "Phariseeism," "legalism," or "Laodiceanism."

12-When a man sets his will to obey God, he does it under the direct conviction of the Holy Spirit. Satan will never encourage anyone to try to resist sin or obey God. It would appear that for one to speak against this sincere act of the soul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is bordering on the sin against the Holy Spirit. He is attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan.

13- All who will not plead with God, and resolutely choose the right, but instead prefer to accept the error that God will do it for them and even "in them," but apart from their own persistent decisions will be lost. All who enter Heaven's gates will in this life have chosen the right, at the cost of friends, applause, power, and position.

14- The cooperation of the human with the divine is a key principle in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. But this cooperation involves far more than coming to Christ. It also includes fighting temptation, choosing the right, upholding standards, and obeying all the laws of God. And many, many times it will appear to yield unpleasant consequences if we do resolutely stay by our resolve to keep our will on the side of God's will and deliberately choose the right and resist the wrong.

15- Only Seventh-day Adventism has the Sanctuary Message. For only Adventism teaches that the highest levels of obedience are to be chosen and lived by the remnant people of God. They are to be a spectacle to men and to angels. But the secret is the Sanctuary Message. For it is through the empowering intercession of Christ, their High Priest in the Sanctuary above, that they can be thus strengthened in their wills to obey God in every particular. (But do not suppose that they are to keep quiet on this secret for the Message of Christ's mediation in the Sanctuary in Heaven lies at the heart of the Third Angel's Message-read "Early Writings," 254-256).

16-We are personally held responsible for every sin we commit. This includes sins performed after initial conversion.

17-A Final Crisis is coming to all the world and the Church will feel its effects to the full. This crisis is literal and is carefully explained in the book "Great Controversy." There is a Mark of the Beast and a Seal of God. And there is a fearful warning by the Third Angel against accepting the errors of the Beast. And those who have a nominal awareness of the Advent Message, and yet who play down, ignore, or spiritualize away the truths of "Great Controversy" in regard to this Crisis, and the dangerous agencies of Satan responsible for it, such as Roman Catholicism, Apostate Protestantism and Spiritualism, will not be prepared for what is just ahead.

18-It IS in our power to hasten the coming of Jesus by putting away sin and developing a character like that of our Lord. In His strength, we can and must prepare for the solemn events that are soon to come on all the earth.

19- The teaching that the will of man is predestined to failure in obeying God's commandments and that those who accept Christ are not thereafter responsible for their sins is both foreign to historic Adventism and devastating to it. It is a two pronged error that will cause many people to be lost. Seventh-day Adventists should not preach or publish such soul destroying errors. They should refuse to listen to such errors, they should openly oppose such errors and they should not employ those who teach such errors.

II-ONE WHO HAS PLED WITH VENDEN

The following is taken from a telephone conversation with an individual who is well-known in the denomination. This individual has spoken at length with Morris Venden on a number of occasions, but without success. You will find this referred to in this conversation. In order to safeguard denominational employment, the identify of this person won't be shown.

"I have deeply appreciated the work of Elder Venden to try and help the people. But as I have traveled and spoken in camp meetings and local churches across America, I have found that there are very definite after-effects in what he is presenting.

I have spoken to many, many people who have read his books and are faced with personal difficulties as a result. His teachings leave people saved in known, ongoing, deliberate sin. He leaves them justified in sin. This is Elder Venden's concept of sanctification, as he presents it.

As long as you are studying and praying, and "in fellowship with Christ," you are being saved, even though you may have cherished sins in your life. This is his teaching.

I called [by phone] a person in the --- --- [A highly placed office of denominational work]. I asked him if he had read these books. He said that he had "casually looked at them." I explained what he is teaching, and --- was shocked but the teachings are there.

Venden's sanctification idea, totally by faith, is really dangerous. He teaches that we can't do anything about sin except by study and prayer. And God does it all, totally, with out your will. If you use your will, it is legalism. And that Is sin. It becomes sin to resist sin!

I have spoken to many people all across America. And have found that this teaching leaves you helpless when temptation arises. [Venden teaches that you cannot use your will when tempted in order to resist sin]. You can only use it to study and pray. You must let God take care of temptation and sin, for you cannot do anything about either one yourself.

But Jesus used His will every moment to resist sin and stay with God, and we must also. For He is our Example. I have asked Morris Venden, "Then I can use my effort of will to submit to God, and that is all right?"

"Yes," he said "that is all right."

"But I cannot use my will to resist temptation?"

"No, he replied; "that is legalism! You cannot, you must not, try to use you will to resist temptation. To do so is legalism."

What Venden is teaching is directly opposed to the truth that we must resist sin in the strength of Christ in this life and that we can successfully resist sin in the strength of Christ in this life.

His message fits beautifully into the Laodicean experience. People have told me: "I know I couldn't do it, and now God will do it for me some day." "I don't have to try today. God is going to do it later on, some day later." "Oh, I have such a strong relief after reading Morris Venden's books. I have been trying to fight sin and now I don't need to. God is going to take care of it in my life."

But the Bible teaches, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." [Ezekiel 18:20] While Morris Venden is teaching that the soul will be saved in sin.

Every false platform says: "You can be saved in sin." Ask any teacher of a new doctrine: "Are you still in Christ while sinning?" If he says "Yes," then he is on the wrong platform. And Venden is on this wrong platform!

He says that I don't have to resist sin, but as long as I study and pray, I am in Christ anyway even though I continue sinning all this time. His teaching is a perfect complement to Ford's. People tell me that Venden is going to bring the young people out of Ford teaching, the truth is that he is taking them there. He is presenting a compromise between historic Adventism and "new theology" that can appeal to all. If successful, he will end up uniting everyone on a platform that most can accept, live in sin and be saved.

And yet strangely enough, his teaching is mixed up with statements that the remnant will overcome sin and keep the commandments. This attracts the faithful who believe in genuine Adventism. It sounds good and it doesn't sound like "new theology" but how is this "overcoming" to be done? That is the question. And Venden tells his listeners and readers that it is only done by letting Christ do it. When we are in Christ, the Holy Spirit gets rid of the sins eventually when He sees that it is best to do so. Till then we just wait on Him to do it for us.

He teaches that we can live in sin and be safe. Satan is not your master, he says. You are now in Christ, and He will take away your sins in His own good time.

He says that we need to obey God, but then he adds that we cannot do anything about it. He teaches that obedience is possible, but only as God gives it. There is nothing for us to do except to study, pray and witness.

Until then, we are to continue in our sins. If God sees that He can gently take away your cherished sins, then He will do it. But until He can quietly, magically remove them without effort on your part, just be patient. That's the patience!! Of the saints. Rest from your works, he says. The works that are of value with God, he teaches, are those of submitting to Christ and reading, praying and witnessing. Doing good is all right, resisting sin and temptation is doing bad. It IS legalism and you may be lost if you keep it up. It is an unprofitable work of the flesh, and we need to repent of all such works.

I have talked and pled with him over this. I have spent many hours with him. But I cannot get through to him. He is adamant on his position and will not budge. There are a number of us who are greatly concerned. But we don't know what to do. The leaders won't listen to us. We've tried talking with them. They say they are not theologians and that Venden is helping people. If only he would unite the Spirit of Prophecy truths about sin and obedience with his message, instead of twisting them to make them fit into his preconceptions. He quotes a lot of Spirit of Prophecy in his books, but this misleads people into thinking that all is well when it is not.

In one of his sermons he tells the story of how he likes a certain kind of ice cream. He craves it, he says. If he walks by an ice cream parlor and knows that it is in there, what is he to do? "I might as well go on in and have it, to resist it would be legalism," he tells the people.

Using your will, an act of will, to resist sin is legalism, he teaches. But what a terrible danger when we cut off the involvement of choice, decision, will, in the warfare against sin!

The truth is that we must yield ourselves to God and then in His Strength put to death those temptations to wrongdoing. I have spoken with a number of church members who have confided in me that they are powerless against temptation. When it comes along, they always give in. I ask them if they have been reading Venden's books. "Why, yes," they say, "how did you know?"

Perhaps most unfortunate of all, so many of our people are too busy to take time to learn what is taking place. Few people are thinking through all this, even fewer seem to even care."

End of conversation--

III-ELDER VENDEN ON "SIN"

The statement below was prepared by one holding a doctorate who lives in the central states. His brief analysis approaches the problem from yet another angle, and thus helps us see the entire picture more clearly.

Morris Venden considers the following statements to be errors:

1. The main issue in sin is what you do.
2. We are not sinful until we sin.
3. If we stopped sinning we would no longer be sinful.

The following statements he considers to be true:

1. Everyone is sinful, whether or not he sins.
2. We are sinful until Jesus comes.
3. God does not hold us responsible for being sinful.
4. We sin because we are sinful, we are not sinful because we sin.
5. Sin is not what we do, it is what we are.
6. Sins are what we do as a result of what we are.
7. Sin results in the transgression of the law.

Here are replies to these errors:

1. He says that this is false: "The main issue in sin is what you do." But this statement is true, for the main issue IS what you do. It is whether or not you and I will keep the commandments. It is whether we will sin or not sin.

"Keeping the commandments of God" is an action, an activity; it is not just a Bible phrase. It is not just believing that we should not sin and "Letting God take care of it for us;" it is personally resisting sin and not doing it. "Blessed are they that DO His commandments." (Revelation 22:14) "The DOERS of the law shall be justified." (Romans 2: 13)

The first four commandments reveal our duty to God, and the last six show our duty to our fellow men. Each one of the Ten Commandments represents an activity. "The covenant which He commanded you to PERFORM, even Ten Commandments." (Deuteronomy 4: 12-13) "If ye KEEP My commandments." (John 15:10) Additional examples could be given (Christ acted to fulfill the law [Matthew 5: 17] ; "whosoever shall do and teach them" [Matthew 5:19]; walking after the Spirit fulfills the law [Romans 8:4]; keeping the commandments is the whole duty of man [Ecclesiastes 12: 13].)

The central issue in the crisis at the end of time is this: Is it possible for us to do what God asks us to do, is it possible for us to keep His commandments, as Revelation 14:12 predicts that we shall do? And this is the central issue in Elder Venden's error on sin.

But consider these passages:

We can render obedience to His law (OA 24).

The law lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above the temptations that lead to sin (1 SM 233).

By His perfect obedience He [Christ] has made it possible for every human being to obey His commandments (COL 312).

"Christ is a living witness that the law can be kept. It is not that men cannot keep the law, but that they will not" (RH, May 28 1901).

"He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God" (RH, March 10, 1904).

2. Venden says that this is false: "We are not sinful until we sin." But it is a correct statement, nevertheless. We were born sinful, that is, inherited sinful tendencies; but we are not sinners until we personally commit sin.

3. He says that this is false, also: "If we stopped sinning, we would no longer be sinful" But he is in error on this point, too.

The Bible fact is that when we stop sinning and keep all of God's commandments, we are no longer sinning, even though we are still sinners(past tense), even though we still retain a sinful nature, or bent toward sin.

"Everyone who by faith keep's God's commandments, will reach a condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before His transgression" (ST, July 30, 1902; 6 BC 1118).

"Through cooperation with divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character" (AA 531).

"Perfection of character is attainable by everyone who strives for it" (ISM 212).

The 144,000 are "without fault [faultless] before God (GC 649), and are called "living saints" (EW 15).

Here are several erroneous statements which Elder Venden believes to be true:

1. He teaches that "Everyone is sinful whether they sin or not." This is incorrect and contradicts the points given in the above several paragraphs (under the heading, "If we stopped sinning, we would no longer be sinful"). The truth is that we must become new creatures in Christ and overcome every fault (MH 492), for through faith in Christ we can correct these faults (AA 564).

2. Venden teaches that "God does not hold us responsible for being born sinful" This is true, but He holds us responsible for remaining in the sins we have chosen. Let us not try to escape from the responsibility for our sins! Let us be done with them.

"In what consisted the strength of the assault made upon Adam which caused his fall? It was not indwelling sin, for God made Adam after His own character, pure and upright. There were no corrupt principles in the first Adam, no corrupt propensities or tendencies to evil. Adam was as faultless as the angels before God's throne." (1 BC 1083)

"Obedience to all the commandments of God was the condition of eating of the tree of life. Obedience through Jesus Christ gives to man perfection of character, and a right to that tree of life." (1 BC 1086)

"As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death. But Christ steps in and passes over the ground where Adam fell, enduring every test in man's behalf. He redeems Adam's disgraceful failure and fall by coming forth from the trial untarnished. This places man on vantage ground with God. It places him where, through accepting Christ as His Saviour, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus he becomes connected with God and Christ." (6BC 1074)

"You cannot bring up your children as you should without divine help, for the fallen nature of Adam always strives for the mastery." (AH 205)

"Satan will bring in every kind of theory to pervert the truth. The work will go hard, for since the fall of Adam it has been the fashion of the world to sin." (6T 129-130)

3. Venden teaches that "We sin because we are sinful, we are not sinful because we sin." Much of this may be true, but Adam did not sin because he was sinful and sufficient provision has been made for us not to remain in our sins.

Our evil propensities must be controlled (CG 42).

An enlightened intellect must control our animal propensities (MYP 237).

Both inherited and cultivated tendencies to wrong can be overcome (MH 176).

Through the plan of redemption, God has provided means for subduing every evil trait (ISM 82).

Christ's perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess if they will be in subjection to God as He was (OA 664).

4. Venden teaches that "Sin is not what we do, it is what we are." Such a concept is false. Too much evidence of Augustine's Original Sin error is to be found in Venden's view of sin.

5. Venden believes that "Sins are what we do as a result of what we are." This may be partly true, but it is a half truth. Both of the above statements (numbers 3 and 4) imply that we cannot do otherwise than to sin. But recall again 7BC 943, where we are told that there is no need to retain even one sinful propensity, and MYP 81, where we are told that we can have strength to overcome as He overcame. Read all of these passages for yourself.

The central theme of the above statements by Venden appears to be this:

Sin is a condition of the organism and not an activity of the organism. In other words, sin is what we are and not what we do. But such a teaching is the basis of the false doctrine of Original Sin. As soon as we say that sin is what we are, then our inherent tendency to sin renders sin inevitable in our lives. The two become identical. The tendency to sin becomes the same as the act of sin itself.

It is true that we have inherited sinfulness from Adam. But sinful tendencies are not sin. The suggestion that man is born a sinner leads us directly to the Roman Catholic doctrine of Infant Baptism, whereby it was assumed that one could wash away the infant's inherited sin by means of sprinkling, so he might have a sinless start in life.

The teaching of inherited sin also leads to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. If man inherits sin from Adam, then Christ, born as a man, must have inherited sin and thus must have been born a sinner also. In order to avoid this logical conclusion, and keep Christ's life sinless (as in fact it was), we must declare that Mary, the mother of Christ; did not, in some way, pass sinful human nature on to Christ. Thus we see that if man had Original Sin, then Christ could not have partaken of our nature and still be sinless. Thus He could not really have been tempted in all points as we are. It would be necessary for Him, therefore; to have been able to keep the law with a strength or power not available to the rest of us.

All this results from this error. The obvious conclusion of this error is that we need not keep the law of God, because Christ kept it for us with a superior power. This error also eliminates our own responsibility for the specific acts of sin that we commit, for why should we be responsible for them since we have no power available to us to eliminate them from our life. Our sins are indeed excusable, and Christ becomes an inadequate Saviour. Sin becomes excusable.

Adam and Eve sinned with a sinless nature. The plan of salvation is based upon the real truth that a human being with a sinful nature can indeed live a sinless life on this earth, for he can do it with empowered help from God.

The doctrine of Original Sin rules out the possibility of a total victory over sin by any human being in this present life. In contrast, the Spirit of Prophecy maintains that sin can be completely eradicated and now. Elder Venden says that the remnant will keep the commandments of God, but he explains it in such a way as to teach that we will continue to remain in our sins without being able to resist them. Then, when probation has closed, it would be forever too late for those who had been taught that they could not and should not resist sin. Venden reflects the Roman Catholic doctrine of Original Sin, and this is the error upon which the doctrinal edifice of Brinsmead and Ford are built.

HERE ARE A NUMBER OF SPIRIT OF PROPHECY REFERENCES THAT REFUTE VENDEN'S TEACHINGS:

WE MUST COOPERATE WITH CHRIST IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

In our endeavor to obtain salvation we must cooperate with divine agencies. There is a certain work that we must engage in, certain tasks that we must perform in order to place ourselves in harmony with the divine so that Christ can do for us that which He is willing and waiting to impart to us.

God has created us free moral agents. This means that He respects our will, our desires, and the choices that we make. He does not interfere with them, set them aside or override them if we are intent upon having our own way. He allows us to act out our desires wherever they may lead unless we pray that His will rather than ours be done in our lives. This means that God's interaction with our will is secondary. That is, it takes place only if the primacy of our desires acquiesces in God's will for us. He will lead us if we allow Him to lead us and place our lives in His hands. There exists a divine principle of cooperation between us and God which is stated as follows:

"While God was working in Daniel and his companions 'to will and to do of His good pleasure,' they were working out their own salvation. Herein is revealed the outworking, of the divine principle of cooperation, without which no true success can be obtained. Human effort avails nothing' without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do. But never as a substitute for our effort." Prophets and Kings" 486-487.

1. "No man can of himself work out his own salvation, and God cannot do this work for him without his cooperation. But when man works earnestly, God works with him, giving him power to become a son of God." 6 Testimonies, 372.'

2. "We must make more earnest decided efforts, if we would have the Lord Jesus abide with us as our counselor and helper." 1 Selected Messages, 319.

3. The Lord does not propose to do for us either the willing or the doing. This is our proper work. As soon as we earnestly enter upon the work, God's grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort. Our souls are to be aroused to cooperate: The Holy Spirit, works the human agent to work out our own salvation. This is the practical lesson the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us. The whole work of the Christian is comprised in willing and doing." Testimonies to Ministers, 240, 241.

4. "Let no man present the idea that man has little, or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing without man's cooperation." 1 Selected Messages, 381."

5. **"Let no man say that our works have nothing to do with our rank and position before God . . Effort and labor are required on the part of the receiver of God's grace."** 1 Selected Messages, 381.'

6. "Earthly blessings cannot be obtained without toil, and can we expect that spiritual and heavenly blessings will come without effort on our part?" 1 Selected Messages, 359.

7. **"Can man be saved in doing nothing? Never, never. He must be a co-laborer with Christ. He cannot save himself. 'We are laborers together with God.'** " Matthew 16:24.

8. **"Some say that Christ had borne all the burden, all the suffering, all the self-denial, and they are willing to let Him bear it. They say that there is nothing for them to do but believe; but Christ says: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'** " Matthew 16:24.

GOOD WORKS ARE NECESSARY THROUGHOUT OUR SANCTIFICATION

In the exercise of faith we must faithfully work to bring forth fruit. This is indicated in the following statements:

1. **"We are to do all we can on our part to fight the good fight of faith. We are to wrestle, to labor, to strive, to organize to enter in at the straight gate. In one way we are thrown upon our own energies; we are to strive earnestly to be zealous and to repent, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts from every defilement. . The Bible teaches that everything regarding our salvation (all phases) depends upon our own course of action. If we perish, the responsibility rests wholly upon ourselves. If we accept God's terms, we may lay hold on eternal life . . Faith and works go hand in hand; they act harmoniously in the work of overcoming. Works without faith is dead; faith without works is dead."** Faith and Works, 48. "

2. **"It is an error to believe that since by grace alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption (sanctification and glorification)."** Steps to Christ, 60.

3. **"He who is trying to reach heaven (glorification) by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience. But his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure."** 1 Selected Messages, 364.

4. "Some say that Christ has borne all the burden, all the suffering, all the self-denial, and they are willing to let Him bear it. They say that there is nothing for them to do but believe; but Christ says: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Matthew 16:24.

5. "If you say 'I am saved' and disregard the commandments of God, you will be eternally lost." 1 Selected Messages, 318.

6. **"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 the deficiency, with His own divine merit."** Faith and Works, 50.

7. "Can a man be saved (sanctified) in doing nothing? Never, never. He must be a colaborer with Christ. He cannot save himself. "We are laborers together with God." 1 Corinthians 3:9.

8. "Earthly blessings cannot be obtained without toil, and can we expect that spiritual and heavenly blessings will come without effort on our part?" 1 Selected Messages, 359.

9. "When we have prayed for something we are to do our best to have it come to pass." 4 Testimonies, 115.

10. **"Those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their characters without determined effort on their part to overcome sin, will be disappointed."** 1 Selected Messages, 336.

11. "Engaging in the struggle here below--work out your own salvation--strain every muscle and train every faculty:" Review and Herald April, 28, 1910.

12. **"We should not wait for God to do for us what we can do for ourselves."** My Life Today, 119.

13. **"We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Jesus says: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'"** 1 Selected Messages, 397.

14. "Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Through faith the Holy Spirit works in the heart to create holiness therein; but this cannot be done unless the human agent will work with Christ." 1 Selected Messages, 374. .

15. **"Apart from Christ no one can do good works. Faith and works go together, believing and doing are blended."** 1 Selected Messages, 373.

16. "Although the good works of man are of no more value without faith in Jesus than was the offering of Cain, yet covered with the merit of Christ they testify to the worthiness of the doer to inherit eternal life (glorification)." 1 Selected Messages, 382.

17. "The condition of eternal life (glorification) is now what it has always been. Perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness." Steps to Christ, 62.

18. "The Lord will receive the sinner when he repents and forsakes his sins so that he can work with his efforts in seeking perfection of character (sanctification)" 5 Testimonies, 631.

19. "Faith and works are two oars which are to be used equally." Welfare Ministry, 316.

GOOD WORKS ARE NECESSARY IN SANCTIFICATION

Bearing fruit means practicing the truths of God in our own lives so that others may obtain the benefits of our justification and sanctification, and are helped toward their own justification or salvation. Sanctification means to believe the truth and to practice it (My Life Today, 261).

Unless the life-giving truths of God's word are faithfully carried out in the life, no man can see the kingdom of heaven (glorification) (faith and Works. 32).

The works that we should do are the works in which the Holy Spirit is our guide and helper. They should be works in which the Holy Spirit cooperates with us. "Man cannot be saved (sanctified) without obedience, but his works should not be of himself. Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure, ' (1 Selected Messages, 364).

The word 'saved' here means sanctified because obedience to all of the commandments comes during sanctification. Education, 7.

So we find that there are conditions to our receiving justification and sanctification and the righteousness of Christ. . While good works will not even save one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works' (1 Selected Messages, 377).

While good works will not even save one soul' means in justification, and 'it is impossible for even one soul to be saved' means sanctification. Works of faith are involved in obeying God's law, for 'obedience to the law of God is sanctification' (Faith and Works, 85). By obedience the truth will sanctify the soul and will help us overcome all weakness of character.

"It is the work of conversion (which here means justification) and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them in accord with the principles of His law (Great Controversy, 461).

Sanctification is a progressive work. It is not attained in an hour, or a day, and then maintained without any special effort on our part (2 Testimonies 472).

Continual growth in grace takes effort, and can be achieved only by daily conformity to God (4 Testimonies, 299).

Even with Christ living within us through His Holy Spirit such conformity is not automatic. It takes earnest, decided effort on our part if we would have the Lord Jesus abide with us as counsellor and helper (1 Selected Messages, 319).

The reason for this is that God has given us freedom of choice and a will. He never overrides these against our will. So the initiative in staying with Christ resides in us. God never forces the will. -Great Controversy, 591.

RIGHT-DOING BY FAITH RETAINS OUR JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

An individual who has been justified will now do good works in order to develop the perfection of his character, his sanctification. When we spoke of an individual not being saved by works we were referring to his initial contact with Christ or his justification. After an individual has been justified he must become sanctified. This means that he must develop his character unto higher and ever higher levels of perfection or sanctification. Hence the works which he does during sanctification are works which not only sanctify him, but these same works also maintain his justification or justify him. This is the reason why the Bible speaks of persons being justified by their works, while it also speaks of individuals not being justified by works. This means that only justified persons, only sanctified persons, only believers who have placed their faith in Christ can be justified by works. It means that the works which sanctify also justify, and that the works which justify also sanctify. This principle is made clear in the following statements:

1. "In order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience through active living faith that works by love and purifies the soul:-1 Selected Messages, 366.
2. "The Christian cannot maintain sanctification without special effort on his part:-2 Testimonies 472.
3. "We must make earnest decided efforts if we would have the Lord Jesus abide with us as our counsellor and helper." 1 Selected Messages, 319.
4. "Righteousness is obedience to the law. The sinner is incapable of rendering it . . He can attain it only through faith. God places the obedience of the Son to the sinner's account and pardons and justifies the repentant sinner and treats him as though he were righteous. . When we do our best He becomes our righteousness.

5. "Conversion (sanctification) may be viewed as a daily experience.

6. "Genuine faith will be manifested in good 'works for good works are the fruit of faith. . The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul. . Where faith is good works appear." 1 Selected Messages, 39.

7. "Faith will never save (sanctify and glorify) you unless it is justified by works." 2 Testimonies, 159.

"Christ came to the earth, taking humanity and standing as man's representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that man, as God created him, connected with the Father and the Son, could obey every divine requirement:" 7 Bible Commentary 926.

"Conversion brings man into a new relation with God." Our High Calling 215.

"When a man is converted, when he comes back to his allegiance to God, he then places himself in a right relation to Him, . .whereby he will regain the moral image of his Maker." Review and Herald March 1, 1887.

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. Isaiah 59 :2.

"In Him was no guile or sinfulness; He was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon Him our sinful nature. Review and Herald Dec. 15, 1896.

"He [Judas] . . did not become transformed, and converted through connection with the True Vine. This dry sapling adhered not to the Vine until it grew into a fruitful, living branch. He revealed that he was the graft that did not bear fruit,-the graft that did not, fiber by fiber and vein by vein, become knit with the Vine, and partake of its life." Sons and Daughters of God 291.

"A mere profession of godliness is worthless." Sons and Daughters of God 297. "like Judas, we may hold the truth in righteousness." Signs of the Times June 5, 1884.

"Repentance for sin is the first fruits of the working of the Holy Spirit in the Life." 6 Bible Commentary 1068.

"If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today." In Heavenly Places 227.

"A knowledge of Christ will avail nothing unless we become like Him in character, bearing the same likeness, and representing His Spirit to the world. Christ is of no value to us unless He is formed within, the hope of glory. If we do not know Him as our personal Saviour, a theoretical knowledge will do us no good." That I May Know Him 107.

"It is through the tangible ingredients of relationship Bible study, prayer, and Christian witness--that we enter into relationship with Him and that we continue to abide in Him, as well. What will be the result? We will experience so close a relationship with Him that Jesus describes it as dwelling in Him, and He in us (See John 17:20-23)." "Ministry" magazine March, 1982, page 9.

"The Three Tangibles: Paul says in Philippians 2:12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. " How do you work out your own salvation? What is your part? What can you do? Three things. The study of the Bible and spending time in prayer are the first two. The third is Christian witness. " To Know God 67..

"The purpose of the daily relationship with Christ is communication. If you maintain regular communication, you will have a relationship. " To Know God 52.

" . . Spending time together. It's just that simple. " To Know God 46..

"A mere assent to this union while the affections are not detached from the world, its pleasures and its dissipations, only emboldens the heart in disobedience." 5 Testimonies 232. "To claim union with Christ (one which is not genuine) hardens the heart in disobedience and self-confidence." 5 Testimonies 48..

"The hope which had been so precious to them lost its attractions; for the specious delusions of Satan almost wholly extinguished the light of salvation through the merits of a crucified Saviour, and men were led to seek to make an atonement through works of their own,-by fasts and penances, and through the payment of money to the church. It was more agreeable to the natural heart thus to seek justification than to seek it through repentance and faith, through belief in, and obedience to, the truth. Review and Herald Nov. 22,1892.

"The author of the book positively asserts that "if you enter into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and continue that relationship with Him from now until He comes again, He will do the rest." To Know God 40,101.

"if you continue the relationship with Jesus, sooner or later your sin is going to go. That's the way it works. That's the only way it works-" To Know God, 94.

"Those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their characters without determined effort on their part to overcome sin, will be disappointed." Maranatha, 227.

IV-THE BOTTOMLINE

Here is the conclusion: Morris Venden is championing overcoming and perfection of character, but the means to that end is by letting God do the overcoming and perfecting, without any effort on your part. And the result is that many who buy this new method are going to remain in their sins. And that is unfortunate.

We mention the cigarette habit as but one example of the fallacy of this new theory. Only those who miraculously have the desire for the habit taken from them will be able to overcome this problem, if Venden's view is correct.

Other examples could be cited, such as the conquest of bad temper, or eating too much or the wrong kinds of food. Venden's theology teaches day-by-day salvation in sin, and says that, if we will patiently stick with his way, it will ultimately gain for us perfection of character. Do you dare wait till later to put away your sins? I say you had better plead with God for empowerment to actively resist and overcome them now!

Do you want to be tied to your sinful habits when the National Sunday Law is passed and the Mark and Seal begins to be affixed? Do you want to be living with the "patience of the saints" with your sins when your name comes up in judgment in the Sanctuary above? At such a time in history as this, when the great Day of Judgment is just upon us, are we to teach or accept the teaching that we do not need to immediately put away our sins?

The ramifications of this terrible theory go on and on. Morris Venden writes in code. And this is why it has been difficult for many to grasp his objective. You may be interested in how the code was cracked.

I will tell you.

It was done by people who personally asked Venden pointed questions. They could not figure out where he was headed and exactly what he meant. So they interviewed him personally. And he gave them the key to the code. One young man found himself puzzled by Venden's Carolina Conference campmeeting presentations, so he went to him privately and asked him what he meant.

"The way you seem to be coming through to me is, that a Christian is not supposed to resist sin through any effort of his will at all. If the removal of sin does not come about easily through the Holy Spirit, then the Christian must wait for the Holy Spirit to do it; is that right?" Venden's reply: "Any effort put into overcoming sin by the Christian is legalism."

In explaining the code, Venden had explained his concepts. The young man then turned to Venden's books and found the errors clearly stated therein. He now stands in opposition to the current Carolina Conference promotion to place a copy of Venden's "How to Make Christianity Real" in every Adventist home in North and South Carolina.

Another individual spent many, many hours with Venden discussing his concepts. And the time spent spanned several years. The result was a very clear view of Venden's beliefs. This denominational worker's statements made over the phone are recorded in this present discussion.

Then there was the individual who teaches at the University of Nebraska, in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has been exposed to Venden's teachings for quite some time now. Sitting in his classes, he has heard Venden repeatedly explain his positions. But ironically, this individual told me that it was because of a different aspect of the problem that aroused him to action. (He is currently appealing to the conference president for help.) We have here been discussing the Venden view on how to deal with sin, but this church member in Lincoln, Nebraska, was aroused to action by Venden's view of sin itself!

We are told in the Spirit of Prophecy that the basic definition of sin is to be found in 1 John 3:4. "Sin 'is the transgression of the law.'" But Morris sees sin as "separation from God." (**But Isaiah 59:2 is speaking of separation from God as an effect of sin, and not as the sin itself or the cause of the sin.**) With this new definition of sin in mind, one can easily see why Venden can believe us safe when, after having had our study and prayer for the morning, we dare to journey through the day's activities without resisting temptation and known sins. We don't need to resist temptation because sin is really only "separation from God," and having had our prayer and study for the day we are now with God!

V-A QUESTION TO PARENTS

I am a parent of teenagers. I want my children saved in the kingdom of heaven. I want them to live clean, honest, good lives. I want them to serve Jesus Christ all their lives. I am told in the Spirit of Prophecy that one temptation yielded to can lead to years of regret and a lifetime of repentance.

I am writing to people who are parents of teenagers, who have been parents of teenagers, or who will be parents of teenagers someday.

If your teenage daughter came to you and said she was going to date a boy she likes very much that night, would you tell her to be very careful, keep hands off, and resist temptation to wrong indulgences, lest it cause tragedy that could ruin her for a lifetime?

Or would you follow the pattern of moral guidance laid down in Morris Venden's books and tapes?

Would you tell your daughter that people who try to be righteous are only trying to escape from God-

that exterior morality is worthless-

that if she tries to resist temptation that night, it will only show that she is still unconverted-

that people who concern themselves with right-doing are classed by God as laodiceans-

that she should not try to be a "good liver"-

that to resist sin only proves that she is still backslidden from Christ-

that a deliberate and willful act of avoiding sin is just another way to try to earn her way to heaven-

for she will only be motivated by legalism and is only trying to make a good impression on others-

for attempted morality is no better than immorality in God's eyes-

that it would only provide evidence that she is on a works program and needs a new birth-

that to consciously avoid or resist temptation that evening would constitute evidence that she is not under the Holy Spirit's control and would be little more than a shallow act of morality-

for avoiding sin has value only in a law court and keeping you out of jail and that eventuality probably would not result from what you might do tonight-

that to stifle temptation would prove you to be a mere moralist and motivated by self-conceit and egotism-

for resisting sin is nothing more than an effort to glorify yourself instead of God-

for to consciously resist sin would be sin as far as God is concerned, for it would be a deliberate choice or act of the will, and therefore could not come from a relationship with Christ-

and would therefore be an act of self-righteousness that you would have to repent of afterward-

that you might as well go ahead and do it for you will not be able to resist it anyway for no one else can either-

for, indeed, it would establish the fact that you are on a works trip, living by righteousness by works, obviously separated from God, and you will ultimately lose out on heaven if you continue to stubbornly use your own willpower in the resistance of sin-

for sin should never be determinedly resisted; instead you should wait for God to make the way easy for you and to give you spontaneous obedience-

and until then you might as well indulge passion, for Calvary has provided no other solution to the sin problem-

for to actively fight sin and temptation and try to live a pure life in harmony with the laws of God could result in your later receiving the Mark of the Beast, the mark of trying to have a righteousness based on right-doing instead of yielding-

for that is the error of the Beast and his Image-

for you must prepare now for the coming crisis, for the issue will be salvation by a close, daily relationship with Christ by faith alone vs. attempting to obey laws and standards and moral codes by an effort of the will.

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 Intercesspr." (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 Vendens 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.

"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.

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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 leaven 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 tiling 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]	2862 [e]	1473 [e]	686 [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]	1386 [e]	3551 [e]	2316 [e]	3588 [e]	1101 [e]	4561 [e]	3551 [e]	286 [e]
to	men	noi	douleuō	nomō	Theou	to	de	sarki	nomō	hamartias
τῷ	μὲν	νοῖ	δουλεύω	νόμῳ	Θεοῦ	; τῇ	δὲ	σαρκί	, 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-DMS	Art-DPS	Conj	N-DPS	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 parenthetic 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]

CHAPTER TWO –VENDEN’S VIEW-ONLY THREE THINGS TO DO TO BE SAVED

DON'T FALL INTO THE TRAP OF DOING THINGS TO PLEASE HIM

"What does it mean to abide in Christ, to be in Christ, and have 'Christ in you' (Col. 1 :27)? Obviously this is referring to a very close relationship. That's what it's talking about. Christ is saying here, Stay in the relationship that was begun when you first accepted Me as your only hope. Stay in relationship with Me."

"Please don't fall into the trap that we talked about earlier, of thinking that the way to stay in relationship with someone is by trying to do things to please him." TKG, 109.

ASSURANCE

OUR ASSURANCE

"If your assurance is based on your behavior or lack of behavior in any way, you are still a legalist." TP, 45.

HOW YOU "WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION"

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-IN ONLY THREE WAYS

"Paul says in Philippians 2:12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." How do you work out your own salvation? What is your part? What can you do?

Three things. The study of the Bible and spending time in prayer are the first two. The third is Christian witness. But you really can't become involved in telling what a wonderful Friend you have found in Jesus until you have a meaningful relationship with Him. So Bible study and prayer become an absolute necessity in order to end up with a genuine Christian witness." TKG,67. '

ALL OF YOUR SALVATION IN ALL OF ITS ASPECTS

"Therefore, all that we can possibly do toward our own salvation in all of its respects is to accept His invitation to communion with Him through prayer and the study of His Word. And through this, we abide in the vine." OOF, 84.

NOT BASED ON WHAT YOU DO

"In other words, salvation is based not upon what you do, but upon whom you know. And no person really sees the necessity for knowing God and therefore sees the need to reserve quality time for that purpose until he realized that salvation is based upon relationship instead of behavior." TKG, 26.

GOD'S IDEAL FOR US-DON'T FEEL ALARM

"So if I find that I am not obeying exactly as Jesus did yet, I don't need to feel alarm. But, please, let's not drag His goal, purpose, and ideal for us down to our level of performance." OOF,43.

GOD'S PLAN-MISREPRESENTING GOD'S PLAN

"If I am forcing myself to refrain from doing certain things simply because someone told me that I mustn't do them, have I really overcome anything? A legalist who relies on outward behavior for salvation would say that I have, but God has a better plan to give me freedom also from the desire to do wrong. If I go around giving people the impression that living a Christian life consists of trying hard to obey, am I truly representing God's plan?" SBF, 40.

GIFTS ALONE

"Christ living His life out in me through the Holy Spirit, obedience, victory, and overcoming have in them not one thread of human devising. All we can do is accept them as gifts." GN,47.

TRYING TO BE OVERCOMERS

"Yet most of us continue to work hard, trying to be overcomers. That's the reason we don't overcome: because you can't work for a gift. To try to earn a gift is an insult to the giver." GN, 49.

SATAN'S ACCUSATIONS;

THE CHARGE: HE WANTS TO GET OVER HIS SINS

"Satan says to God, 'You see that person there; seeking You? He's only interested in himself. He wants to get to heaven, and get over his problems, and he wants that peace that he hears others talk about. He wants victory over his sins, and to get rid of his ulcers. He's not seeking You because he loves You, he's seeking You because of what he can get from You. It's the same charge the devil made against Job.'" FTW, 129. '

PRIMARY TEMPTATIONS-ONE OF THE FIRST TEMPTATIONS",

"He decides that he will now give up his smoking, drinking, rock records, and temper. But the devil sits back and laughs, for he knows that we will end up with nothing but bruises when we try to overcome sin in our own strength. One of the first temptations a person faces when he decides he wants to be a Christian, is to try to be good. But righteousness is not something that we were intended to seek! It is a byproduct of knowing Jesus, and results from 'beholding' Him." OOF 51.

HOW THE DEVIL SIDETRACKS YOU

"A person says, 'I'm interested in religion. I'm interested in becoming a Christian.' And the devil says, 'Oh, oh!' And he calls together a ways and means committee. It has nothing to do with money. It's ways and means of sidetracking the person from knowing God. The devil says, 'If this person is going to insist on trying to become a Christian, then let's get him to work on righteousness.' So he begins to whisper in the person's ear, 'You've got to be good if you're going to be a Christian. You've got to do what's right. You'd better work on it! Oh, you slipped today. You'd better work harder.'.... TKG, 73

"YOU HAVE TO BE PERFECT," THE DEVIL SAYS "We hear the news that it's [the close of probation] just about over. And the devil comes to us and clubs us over the head with our failures. 'You have to be perfect,' he says, 'and you're not even close.' But instead of bowing at the feet of Jesus and going to Him for the power to overcome and leaving the results with Him, we try to drag God's standard down to our level of performance. But assurance is not based on a lowered standard of righteousness, assurance is based only on the grace of the lord Jesus Christ." TP, 61

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]**

CHAPTER FOUR- SOME THINGS HE SAYS TO AVOID IN VICTORY OVER SIN

WORKING

SIMPLY ACCEPTING THEM

"He gives us rest from trying to earn our way to heaven, from our own attempts to overcome sin and the devil, and from fighting the battles that Jesus has promised to fight for us. Remember that a gift is a gift. It is not something you earn, merit, or pay for. You cannot work for one of God's gifts. Are there one or more of the gifts under this Christmas tree that you have not yet received? Is it possible that it is because you still are trying to work for them instead of simply accepting them?" TCT, 5.

GIVING ATTENTION TO FRUIT

"And if you want righteousness, you don't work on righteousness; you put your effort on knowing Jesus, who is righteous. If you want faith, if you want love, you don't work on either; they are fruits of the Spirit." 3 AUC CM.

FAITH PLUS WORK BRINGS IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE

"Those who believe it, sanctification by faith plus works, can believe only in imperfect obedience until Jesus comes. But those who believe in sanctification by faith alone can believe that perfect obedience is possible any time that they are depending upon Jesus instead of their own power." AS, 7.

DON'T TRY WORKING

'Well,' says someone, 'then how do I get over my problems?'

"Accept the fact that you can do nothing apart from Christ (John 15:5). This text doesn't say that you can do 90% or 30% apart from Him, because it is talking about man's inner nature, where all are equally helpless. We can do nothing apart from Christ.

"If I want to give up my temper, I don't try working on my temper. I don't even pray overly much about it, because it is possible, even in my prayers, to fight the bad fight of sin. 'Lord help me today not to do this, and this, and this. My attention is then on myself or things!'"

"Instead, I focus the attention on my relationship-on Him!" MCR, 128.

HE DOESN'T NEED OUR HELP

"God said, 'You won't have to fight. The Lord will fight for you: And the first thing they did was to begin scrapping with their enemies. They too had to learn that God has the power to do what He's promised, and He doesn't need our help to do what He has promised to do for us. Admitting our helplessness to do it ourselves is the final step before coming to Him.'" FTW, 49.

TRYING-TRYING HARD TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT

"I must teach you how to grow a healthy apple tree. An apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree, never in order to be one. A Christian does what is right because he is a Christian, never in order to be one. Many think the way to be a Christian is to try hard to do what's right. That is not the way to be a Christian:-3 AUC CM.

TAKING OVER OUR BATTLES

"God can only deliver us by taking over our battles for us." MCR,131. .

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO IT ALL

"I do need You. I'll always be a sinner, and if You want me to live victoriously, You'll have to do it ALL for me." MCR, 132. [Emphasis his.]

SIN NEVER STAMPED OUT BY US

"The principle and premise of the great theme of righteousness by faith is that as Christ comes into the life, sin is crowded out by Him. It is not stamped out by us." MCR, 134.

STOP TRYING HARDER

"We must leave our battles against our sins, our problems, to Him. Here is one of the hardest ideas for human beings to accept, probably because of humanity's natural pride and self-sufficiency. We cherish the thought that we can do more if we try harder." SBF, 77..

NEVER FORCE YOURSELF TO OBEY

"The results of that saving faith, doing what's right, living a good life (inwardly as well as outwardly) are not coerced. Whenever I have to force myself to obey by trying to conform to the principles of conduct in Christian life, I am simply acknowledging that I'm an immature Christian." SBF, 49.

FIGHTING AND TRYING

"But then he said that in sanctification, you've got to work really hard, fighting the devil and trying hard to overcome sin and to obey God's requirements. But if sanctification is the fruit, then it will be the result of accepting justification." OOF, 85.

WHEN THE OBEDIENCE BECOMES IMPERFECT.

"To whatever extent we are involved in trying to obey, to that degree will the obedience be imperfect. The person who believes that perfect obedience is possible through the grace of God, also recognizes that we must give up on ourselves and let Christ dwell within. He concludes that obedience comes by faith alone, plus or minus nothing. And if it is ever going to be a perfect reality, it will have a result exclusively through God's doing." OOF, 61.

[MY RESPONSE TO WORKING]

["Many feel that their faults of character make it impossible for them to meet the standard that Christ has erected; but all that such ones have to do is to humble themselves at every step. . . . **He adds to their work His perfection and sufficiency, and it is accepted of the Father.** We are accepted in the Beloved. The sinner's defects are covered by the perfection and fullness of the Lord Our Righteousness. **Those who with sincere will, with a contrite heart, are putting forth humble efforts to live up to the requirements of God are looked upon by the Father . . . as obedient children, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto them"** (1888 materials, p. 402; italics supplied).

"Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition . . . , but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man, and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature, and finally driven from the soul temple.

"It is through grace that we are brought into fellowship with Christ, to be associated with Him in the work of salvation. Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners. . . . *Faith can present Christ's perfect obedience instead of the sinner's transgression and defection.* . . . The repentant soul realizes that his *justification* comes because *Christ, as his*

substitute and surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness" (Review and Herald, Nov. 4, 1890; italics supplied).

ILLUSTRATION: A family often had no money for gas. When necessary, the father would offer his prized car jack, worth far more than a few gallons of gas, as a substitute for cash, a surety that he would return to pay. Because of the jack's inherent value, the owner of the gas station never turned down this substitute. Indeed, nothing more was needed for payment. But something was required to retain possession of the valuable jack. Had the father not returned with cash, he would have lost its ownership and could no longer have used the jack as credit.

We have no merit by which to use justification's credit line. But we assure continued substitution ("jack") by gratefully choosing to obey. Upon the basis of this choice, our Surety guarantees that He, the Substitute, will pass us through the judgment and preserve us until His return (Phil. 1:6). **Unless we choose to obey, however, we surrender all claim to justification.**

The choice to obey—not obedience itself!—permits an honest credit claim. Obedience follows as we trust the Surety. The father could not honestly return for the jack without the exchange. Nor can we receive justification without surrendering our sinfulness for His righteousness. The substitution does not act directly upon the future. But the future is assured so long as we retain the credit line by a faith in our Surety, a faith that honors His ownership and lordship.

A lack of commitment to obey may mean we claimed justification dishonestly—like getting gas without paying but refusing to leave the jack. If so, we were never justified in the first place. Our claim was not an act of loyal faith but of disloyal presumption. Or we may have exercised true faith but forfeited justification by adopting a false assurance that we need no exchange, no continued commitment to obey.

In the latter we again become responsible for sins of the past (cf. Eze. 18:20-26). Not because Christ retracts past credit, but because of the nature of the credit line. The past is always covered by present justification—never by past justification. Christ Himself—not some mark in heavenly records—is our justification! We are justified when we are in Him and unjustified out of Him!

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. {1SM 366.1}

James writes of Abraham and says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:21-24). In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect. {1SM 366.2}

I was attending a meeting, and a large congregation were present. In my dream you were presenting the subject of faith and the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith. You repeated several times that works amounted to nothing, that there were no conditions. The matter was presented in that light that I knew minds would be confused and would not receive the correct impression in reference to faith and works, and I decided to write to you. You state this matter too strongly. There are conditions to our receiving justification and sanctification, and the righteousness of Christ. I know your meaning, but you leave a wrong impression upon many

minds. **While good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works.** God saves us under a law, that we must ask if we would receive, seek if we would find, and knock if we would have the door opened unto us. {FW 111.1}

END OF MY RESPONSE TO WORKING.]

OVERCOMING

OVERCOME-BY NOT TRYING TO DO RIGHT

"The reason we've become so discouraged in trying to live the Christian life is that we've never known how to overcome. We often talk about what we should do, but people say, 'Yes, I've tried that, and it doesn't work.'

"Eventually the follower of Christ must give up trying to 'do what is right' in his own power. He gives up on the idea that he can do, anything about his life, except to go to God, because surrender has primarily to do with self, not sins." MCR, 124.

YOU HAVE NO PART TO DO IN OVERCOMING,

"It didn't help my morale when I received a pamphlet describing, One Hundred Sins That laodicea Must Repent Of. ' It was discouraging! Is fighting the bad fight of sin the plan that God has for each of us?

"Someone else told me, 'look, you don't realize how the victorious life is obtained. Victory comes when you do your part and God does His. You have enough will power to do part of it. You choose to be good with your will, then you act with your will power in carrying out your choice. Do the best you can, and God will make up the difference by removing the evil from your heart.'

"This plan might be termed 'subsidy religion,' in which God would subsidize my weak power, if I would do my 30%. But I didn't even have the will power to do that much. If I was trying to overcome my temper, I was supposed to make sure that I didn't slap my enemy. Then God would take the hate out of my heart. But my backbone was like wet spaghetti. I couldn't even do my part so that God could take the hate out of my heart. This 'subsidy' program kept me frustrated, wondering just how far short I was falling each time.

"When I tried harder to conquer my problems, I discovered it to be a fierce and hopeless battle. If I had any time left over after fighting my sins, then I'd read a verse or say a prayer to keep God happy, but usually after hassling all of my problems, I didn't have enough time or energy to bother.

"I found that it was possible to fight the devil so hard that I became more like him." MCR. 121. 122. '

THE ONLY WAY TO RESIST THE DEVIL

" 'Wait!' objects someone, 'You're describing "cheap grace," but the Bible says that we have to fight.'

"True. But how do I fight the devil? He's stronger than I am. The only way to resist the devil is to turn the battle over to superior forces. The good fight of faith is the effort to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." MCR, 123, 124.

NEVER DOING RIGHT TO BE A CHRISTIAN

"An apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree; never in order to be one. And a Christian does what is right because he is a Christian, never in order to be one." FTW, 97.

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE-WRONG TO ATTEMPT IT

"These Christians have been miss-instructed. It is wrong for a person to attempt to live the Christian life. We are not asked to do so." SBF, 40.

RIGHT THINGS-WHEN EVERYTHING RIGHT IS WRONG

"But the point is that anyone who is living a life apart from Jesus is going to do whatever right things he does for wrong, self-centered reason." TKG, 22.

GOOD WORKS-MORALITY IS WORTH NOTHING

" 'Wait a minute!' someone objects. 'Isn't morality worth something? Maybe it will lead me to God eventually.' Our good works will not bring us to God. The law only shows us our sins so that we will seek God.

[Good works do not bring us to God, but sin does]

The only legitimate obedience in the Christian life comes as a spontaneous result of our relationship with Christ. If being good by not being bad were our method, then we would be operating our wills in the wrong way. God never intended us to employ them toward being good. He wanted us to use them only toward knowing Him." SBF,52.

MORALITY-THE COUNTERFEIT TO REAL MORALITY

"Of course it does not mean that a religious life will lead to immorality. Actually, true spirituality is the only thing that will produce a genuinely moral life. But the world has a substitute for real morality, a counterfeit known as conformity to right conduct and principles." SBF, 25-26.

MORE DANGERS FROM MORALITY

"Morality can come from all sorts of bad motives. We can put on a good performance because we want others to think well of us, because we want to stay out of jail, or even because we're just too afraid to do anything else." FTW, 184.

MORALITY IS NOT CHRISTIANITY

"We are not against morality. Morality is worthwhile. It will keep you out of jail. It will keep you from getting traffic tickets. It will keep you from lying in the gutter. But morality is not Christianity, and it will not get you to heaven." FTW,47.

NO SALVATION IN OBEDIENCE

"How are we supposed to know whose side we're on? Certainly not by our behaviour alone. If the strongest person in the world, the one with the greatest self-discipline, cannot really change his heart one iota, then what benefits result from being moral? Certainly there are some, but salvation is not one of them, and neither is being a Christian. Being moral or outwardly good will never save a person, for it is possible for some to achieve it without a relationship with God." SBF, 28-29.

THE BURDEN OF HOLINESS NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE FROM THE BURDEN 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, 99.

WATCHING-"WATCH"-BUT NOT TO RESIST SIN

"It is true that Jesus told us to watch and pray. But He wasn't talking primarily about watching for temptations on specific things. We need to watch that nothing will separate or keep us from God." MCR, 163.

RESISTING THE DEVIL-RESISTING SATAN MAKES US LIKE HIM

"Remember that God never intended that our sin, our mistakes, or our problems should obsess us. Have you ever tried so hard to go to sleep at night that you have kept yourself awake? It's possible to fight Satan so strongly that you become more like him." SBF, 109.

GOD DOES NOT EXPECT US TO FIGHT SIN

"I wish that we could clearly understand where the battle takes place. The Bible tells us to 'fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed, a good profession before many witnesses' (1 Timothy 6:12). Are we supposed to combat the enemy? Or do we engage in the fight of faith? Is there a difference between the fight of faith and the fight of sin?

" 'Oh,' says someone, 'wait a minute. Doesn't the Bible say, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"?' Yes, it does in James 4:7. But how are we supposed to do it? By battling against sin and the devil? No. By submitting to God, by waging the fight of faith.

"The fight of faith takes every ounce of energy, self discipline, and willpower, every bit of human effort that we can muster. God does expect us to engage in this battle, but He does not expect us to fight sin." SBF, 70,71.

[MY RESPONSE TO JAMES 4:7,8 'RESIST THE DEVIL'] [⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.

7. Submit. James here begins a series of ten imperatives, which every church member subject to the danger of becoming a "friend" to the world (see v.4) does well to heed. Before God can bestow His "grace" (v. 6) the "humble" man must be willing to submit his will to God's plan. Submission implies complete trust that all God's arrangements are for his own good (see Heb. 12:9).

Therefore. That is, because of the danger of pride and self-interest Christians must place themselves under God's command. He promises not to allow any temptation beyond our power of resistance (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

Resist. Gr. *anthistēmi*, "take a stand against." Compare Eph. 4:27.

Submission and drawing nigh give us power to resist

But the verse doesn't say that submitting and drawing nigh to God mean we no longer resist Satan, supposedly relinquishing this responsibility to God while we keep out of His way. Rather, the verse is clear as is Ephesians 6:12-17 that submission and drawing nigh give us power to resist, much as the armor of faith gives this power. In no way do these Scriptures imply, especially as we place them alongside other passages, that faith means the total abandonment by the Christian of the struggle with sin, letting Christ do it all in our place.

Ellen White's writings explicitly contradicts his view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.

Venden professes great respect for the writings of Ellen White. He speaks of how both the investigative judgment and the Spirit of Prophecy are under attack in the church today. Yet he seems not to have considered the extent to which Ellen White's writings explicitly contradict his view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.

He sees the "fight of faith" and the fight against sin and Satan as two different things. Yet Ellen White says they are one and the same:

"The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith." {5T 222.2}

"We must come, we must resist the Devil, we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, we must run the race with patience, we must fight the fight of faith, we must wrestle with principalities and powers, we

must agonize before God in prayer, if we would stand blameless before the throne of God. We must have the faith that works, or it will be powerless." {RH, September 6, 1892 par. 7}

No hint of any kind can be found, in these or any inspired statements, that God will fight sin and wrestle against principalities in our place so long as we pray and have faith.

Other Ellen White statements make it as clear as possible that while God's imparted strength is essential to the conquest of evil, the work of conquering evil remains our work.

"The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan." {GC88 510.3}

"Our part is to put away sin, to seek with determination for perfection of character. As we thus work, God cooperates with us." {RH, June 11, 1901 par. 4}

"It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement." {CET 189.2} (Christian Experience and Teachings)

"Each day he [the Christian] must renew his consecration, each day do battle with evil. Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ's strength for victory." {AA 476.3}

"We have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues to the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts." {MYP 285.1}

"There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act. The soul must be kept from every stain, through faith in Him who is able to keep you from falling." {2MCP 405.4}(Mind Character & Personality)

One must defy the simplest rules of grammar and syntax to read into these statements the idea that man's only struggle in the saving process is to keep "in relationship" while any direct confrontation with sin or Satan is to be left completely to God. The above passages repeatedly declare the opposite that in fact we are to struggle with sin and Satan, using the strength God gives us.

We do well to remember Ellen White's warning:

"In reading the Testimonies be sure not to mix in your filling of words; for this makes it impossible for the hearers to distinguish between the word of the Lord to them and your words." {GW 374.3}

END MY RESPONSE JAMES 4:7]

HEADING DOWNWARD WHEN WE FIGHT SIN

"If we continue to seek to fight sin and the devil on our own, then our direction will be downward. Anyone who does not have a continuing relationship with the Lord Jesus, whether, he has once become a Christian or not, is giving Satan control of his direction." FTW, 199.

[Obviously, the words "on our own" makes the above quotation correct. But Venden does not believe or teach that we should fight sin IN GOD'S STRENGTH either. We are told not to fight it at all]

RESISTING SIN-RESISTING SIN CHEAPENS GRACE

"Let's not cheapen God's grace and His plan by saying that He helps us grit our teeth and struggle more diligently to be good through our own deliberate efforts." SBF, 65.

GIVE THAT UP THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN

"If you have problems, seek Christ instead of concentrating on your problems. I don't fight the bad fight of sin. I give that up and seek Christ instead. God has promised to fight for us. He's already gained the victory, and it's ours as a gift if we accept Him. Our fight is to seek Him!" MCR, 134, 135.

THE BAD FIGHT OF SIN

"Unfortunately, most of us immediately confuse the good fight of faith, or trust, with the bad fight of sin. We think that fighting the good fight of faith consists of trying hard to live a good life. The problem is that the strong person who fights sin might outwardly succeed to some degree, but becomes proud of his success, and also fails to see his need of God. On the other hand, the weak person who tries to change his life by fighting sin doesn't even outwardly succeed and he becomes discouraged. Neither understands what the fight of faith is all about." MCR, 30.

NO BETTER OFF DOING GOOD THAN THOSE DOING BAD

"While some are better able to keep from doing bad things, they are actually no better off than the weak people who are obviously suffering defeat in their Christian experience." MCR,31.

THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"Although the sum and substance of the Christian life is being acquainted with Jesus each day, we often don't believe that it's that easy. The devil tries to get us to work on righteousness and our faith, and usually after we've spent our time battling the enemy, we don't have any time left over for getting acquainted with Jesus," MCR, 79, 80.

STOP FIGHTING THE WAVES OF SIN

"[Illustration of waiting to rescue people from drowning till they are almost ready to go under.] Did you know that the salvation of man is based upon the same principle? We must come to the place where we are ready to stop fighting the waves of sin. Jesus sees us floundering in the sea of life. We're struggling, desperately trying to fight our sin, trying to overcome our problems. But the devil is stronger and smarter than we are. It doesn't seem we'll ever get victory. Finally, when we have given up and are about ready to sink forever, we admit that we can't make it."

"You may wonder why God hasn't given you the power to overcome your sins. Perhaps' you haven't yet reached the place where you realize your weakness and helplessness. Perhaps you haven't learned what it means to surrender to Him."

"Most of us realize the importance of 'surrender,' but we fail to understand exactly what and how to give up. How easily our attention focuses on the sins and the behavior. We usually think that righteousness is only 'right doing' and that the way to do right is to stop sinning (doing wrong)." MCR, 119,120.

TRYING TO BE WHAT WE SHOULD BE

"Isn't this what we've usually done in our Christian experience? We know what we should be like, and we often work on trying to be like that. Instead, we should work on the cause of the goodness, the relationship. If my sins are the result of separation from God, then I should seek to maintain the close communion with God and He will take care of my sins." MCR,126. .

REFUSING TO DO WRONG WHEN WHAT WE LOVE IS WRONG

"The program that most of us have operated on at some time, at least, in our Christian lives is this: we think we will always love sin, but we will grit our teeth and stay away from it because we love God. The usual concept in Christian circles is that in living the Christian life we refrain from evil and do what is right because we love God, even though we would like to do wrong. 'I love to dance. I always did. I probably always will. But

I won't do it, because I love Jesus. I love pork. Pork, was always one of my favorites. I'd love to have some right now. But I've given it up, that's my cross for Jesus, and I'll bear it for Him.' I do not believe that this is genuine obedience. Yet how many of us have wasted countless time and energy working on obedience, instead of seeking to know God." FTW,179.

GIVING UP SINFUL PRACTICES-THE GIVING UP THINGS GIMMICKS

'Well," says someone, 'we have to surrender all our sins and problems before we can be righteous.'

"So we determine to give up these things. Have you ever tried it? One time I became excited about living the victorious Christian life. I promised God that I would surrender my evil habits. To accomplish this, I made a list of seven major sins and resolved to work on them. The first sin on my list was my ugly temper. The next day, I began trying to control my temper. When I'd get angry, I counted to 10. Sometimes I succeeded in not slapping my enemy, but as I counted to 10, my neck was red and the veins stood out, my eyes were bulging, my stomach churned, and my fists were clenched. Somehow this didn't sound like victorious living to me!"

"Someone told me that the real problem was with my thinking. I hadn't learned to control my thinking. And because 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,' I needed to work on my thoughts. Have you ever tried this one? 'Today I won't think about oops! I just thought about it!' . .

"Finally I reached the point where I felt I had overcome my temper; so I moved to the next sin on my list. This time I was successful. I found I could get rid of this sin easily, and I became proud of my own abilities. Unfortunately, by the time I started working on no. 3, I discovered, much to my chagrin, that my bad temper had returned." MCR, 120.

OBEDIENCE

ONLY TEACH OBEDIENCE IF YOU UNDERSTAND IT

"It is only people who understand that they have already been accepted by God who can safely talk about obedience. If I am not sure of my acceptance, it is extremely hazardous for me to study the subject of obedience, because it will be nothing but discouraging." FTW, 158.

GIVE UP ON THE IDEA OF PRODUCING OBEDIENCE

"If we are sinners, and cannot produce genuine obedience apart from God, then all we can do regarding ourselves is to surrender ourselves, give up on the idea that we can ever produce genuine obedience. " FTW, 168.

DOESN'T ACCEPT US BECAUSE OF OUR OBEDIENCE

"In the first place, God doesn't accept us because of our obedience. He accepts us when we come to Him, presenting the merits of Jesus in dying in our place. Our acceptance before Him, and the certainty of our salvation, is already settled, as we continue to accept what Jesus did for us at the cross." FTW, 174.

ALWAYS AND ONLY BY FAITH

"Obedience is always and only by faith, because it is the fruit of faith, never of our own efforts." 00F, 88.

NOT A CAUSE OF OUR SALVATION

"Obedience is not the cause of our salvation, even though it is a condition. It is the result." FTW, 187.

WHY WE CAN SAFELY IGNORE OBEDIENCE

"Some may still object that others will stop struggling to do what's 'right' now for the purpose of learning to know Jesus later, and thus open the door for an interim of anarchy. I'd like to propose that it is an unfounded fear because of an obvious conclusion: The strong person who has succeeded in behaving morally through his willpower and backbone without Christ will continue what's 'right' for selfish reasons, whether or not he hears about salvation through faith in Christ. A person who has succeeded in staying out of trouble and out of jail will not suddenly scrap everything. I haven't seen a 'strong' person yet who became immoral because he decided that righteousness by faith meant that he could go ahead and do whatever he had always wanted to do anyway so that 'grace may abound'. Also I'd like to suggest that the weak person who hasn't succeeded in doing right is going to continue that way until he experiences genuine faith, and he won't be any worse off than he was before." SBF, 58-59.

THE PURPOSE OF OBEDIENCE-OBEDIENCE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SALVATION

"It isn't safe to talk about obedience and overcoming and victory and any of that, unless we have it clearly in mind that we already have been accepted because of what Jesus has done for us. We will get the impression that our obedience has something to do with our acceptance. We will get the impression that our obedience has something to do with saving us eternally, as the cause of our eternal life. And those misunderstandings have been around too long. Do you know what the purpose of obedience is? It is to bring glory to God. It isn't to save us in heaven. If our obedience has nothing to do with causing our acceptance with God, then who here tonight is totally accepted?" 5 AUC CM. "

GOOD DEEDS-GOD DOES NOT LOOK AT OUTWARD ACTIONS

"It is the motives and desires on the inside that God looks at, not our outward appearance. We may mow the widow's lawn, in itself a good deed, but apart from Christ it is sin, because our motive will inevitably be a selfish one." FTW, 164. "

RIGHT LIVING

GOOD LIVES AND BEHAVIOR

"Many people have exhibited good lives apart from Jesus, at least lives that were outwardly good. Some in our world will give you the shirt off their back, and yet curse God in the same breath. External good behavior can result from all kinds of bad reasons." OOF, 87.

IT DOESN'T PROVE A THING

"Would you like to know for sure whether or not you are a Christian? Would you like to know for sure whether you are a genuine follower of Christ? 'Oh,' someone says, 'the proof of it is if you are living a good life.' No, that doesn't prove a thing." FTW, 184.

CONTROLLED ACTIONS

CONTROLLING ACTIONS DOES NOT OVERCOME SIN

"The strong person may control his outward actions, but he hasn't overcome the sin. Sin is always from within, and is only overcome by God's power." FTW, 209.

VICTORY OVER SIN

VICTORY FROM ABOVE; NO VICTORY FROM WITHIN

"He [Jesus] 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.

[A victory from above (the Venden view): God does it all, the willing and the doing, we only passively yield. Apparently, there is only growth and maturing in yielding, and none in nobility of character and determination to do the right because it is right. A victory from within (Bible-Spirit of Prophecy view). As we come and yield ourselves to Christ, He works out His will in our lives by strengthening our resolve and our acts to do the right and resist the wrong. Continuing this faith-that-works relationship with God, we grow into His moral likeness. We do not have to wait for heaven to begin this ennobling process.]

BEHAVIOR

BEHAVIOR CONCENTRATION TURNS US FROM JESUS

"When we begin to concentrate on our behavior and performance, our attention is away from Jesus, and our dependence upon His power is broken. This can happen even though the relationship with Him may be continuing day by day. Whenever our attention is on our sins and weaknesses and problems, we are overcome." FTW, 199.

YOUR BEHAVIOR IS NOW ONLY HIS CONCERN.

" 'Wait!' objects someone. 'If my behavior is supposed to improve when I get acquainted with God through His Word and through prayer, then why is my behavior worse than ever when I try this method? That doesn't make sense!'

"Again, you're measuring your Christian experience and closeness to God by your performance and actions. But Christianity is based upon whom you know, not what you do as you're learning to know Him better. Your part in the great plan of God is to become acquainted with Him, and your behavior is His concern." MPR, 142.

WORKING ON BEHAVIOR KEEPS YOU FROM CHRIST

"When I shift gears from behaviorism to fellowship and relationship with God, then and only then does it become possible for me to continue seeking Him constantly." MCR, 148.

GOOD BEHAVIOR IS STILL SIN

"The strong-willed person who quits his smoking, drinking, and dancing, apart from Christ, may become a 'good' church member. But who really did it? He did." FTW, 168.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT BASED ON BEHAVIOR

"The term surrender is grossly misunderstood by thousands of Christians. If a person's idea of Christianity is based upon behavior, then his primary focus will be on the Ten Commandments and trying hard to obey them. If he is strong, he will 'succeed', if he is weak, he will fail. The behaviorist philosophy never gets the person to the point of helplessness to take him on to surrender. The behaviorist who is strong and apparently succeeds doesn't realize he is helpless. The behaviorist who is weak says, 'I can't do it; I give up,' quits trying, and goes away from God at the very point, if he only knew it, at which he is the closest to God that he may ever be."

"The behaviorist thinks that surrender is giving up certain things in his life, giving up his sins, giving up his problems and his weaknesses. So the behaviorist says, 'I stand before God and this audience, and I promise that from now on I won't smoke, drink, or dance anymore.' If he is strong, he never does them again, and he becomes a so called 'good' church member. If surrender has primarily to do with giving up things, the strong succeed and the weak fall." FTW, 51.

BEHAVIOR IS NO MEASUREMENT OF BEING IN CHRIST.

"One of the proofs that we are hopelessly hooked on the do-it-yourself approach is that often when a person begins to seek a relationship with God, he still measures whether or not he has a relationship by his behavior." FTW, 82.

[MY RESPONSE TO BEHAVIOR WHICH I WILL CALL PERFORMANCE] [Over and over we are warned against examining our performance and comparing it with God's law. (See MCR pages 30, 46; 128, 137, 140, 142, 143, 144, 146-10). We are told that this is focusing attention on ourselves instead of on Christ. In the chapter "Doing Worse When We Try", confusion is again introduced by intermingling descriptions of temptations that come through trials and difficult circumstances, and descriptions of actually giving in to temptation and sin. The two are not the same! The newly converted Christian may face many trials and temptations, but that does not mean that his behavior or his performance are worse! Indeed, if his response to the temptation is worse, then he had better reexamine his commitment. To experience more trials and harder temptations when surrendering to Christ should not surprise us. But to experience worse behavior and performance is to deny the power of Christ. It is evidence that true conversion has not taken place.

On page 140, Job is used as an example of things going worse because of his commitment to God. But there is a failure to recognize that this was in circumstances and not in Performance. Job's performance didn't deteriorate in proportion to the circumstances. If it had, Satan's point would have been gained.

On MCR page 142 we are warned several times against measuring our Christian experience by our obedience to God's law. How can this be harmonized with James 1:21-27? And why did God give us His law? It is true that there is danger in focusing exclusively on our sins and defects, but when we are comparing our lives with God's great standard of righteousness in order that we might strive to be more like Christ, this is proper and essential.

4 T 361 "The wisdom which God gives will lead men to self-examination. The truth will convict them of their errors and existing wrongs. The heart must be open to see, realize, and acknowledge these wrongs, and then, through the help of Jesus, each must earnestly engage in the work of overcoming them."

ST June 20, 1895 "John says, 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.' Here we have the true definition of sin; it is 'the transgression of the law.' How often the sinner is urged to leave his sins, and come to Jesus; but has the messenger who would lead him to Christ clearly pointed out the way? Has he clearly pointed out the fact that 'sin is the transgression of the law,' and that he must repent, and forsake the breaking of God's commandments?"

How does Venden measure up to these questions? In reality he endeavors to show that sin is not really an issue of transgressing God's law, but rather an issue of taking some time each day to seek God in Bible study and prayer; it even endeavors to show that one of the main things that the sinner must repent of is his efforts to keep God's law! He tries to show that the sinner must forever forsake his efforts to keep God's law!

ST (cont.) "Man's conscience has become hardened by sin, and his understanding darkened by his transgression, and his judgement has become confused as to what is sin. He has become benumbed by the influence of iniquity, and it is essential that his conscience be aroused to understand that sin is the transgression of God's holy law. He who does not obey the commandments of God is a sinner in the sight of God..... Righteousness can be defined only by God's great moral standard, the Ten Commandments. There is no other rule by which to measure character."

ST Mar.11 1897 "He who earnestly desires to fulfill the will of God must daily look into the law of God, the great moral looking glass, that he may see himself as God sees him. But too often Christians neglect to do this. (The book would have us believe that this would be focusing our attention on self rather than on Christ) The mirror is not looked into as constantly as it should be, and our defects of character pass unnoticed."

Why be concerned about our defects of character if they are not our responsibility, and we can do nothing about them (pages 124, 132); if our transgressions of God's law are immaterial as long as we seek fellowship with God through Bible study and prayer (page 146); if to look at them is to take our eyes off Christ (page 128)?

ST (cont.) "Many apologize for their spiritual weakness, for their outbursts of passion, for the lack of love they show their brethren. They feel a sense of estrangement from God, a realization of their bondage to self and sin; but their desire to do God's will is based on their own inclination, not upon the deep, inward conviction of the Holy Spirit. They believe that the law of God is binding; but they do not, with the eager interest of judgement-bound souls, compare their actions with that law. They admit that God should be worshiped and loved supremely, but God is not in all their thoughts. They believe that the precepts which enjoin love to man, should be observed; but they treat their fellowmen with cold indifference, and sometimes with injustice. Thus they walk away from the path of willing obedience. They do not carry the work of repentance far enough. The sense of their wrong should lead them to seek God most earnestly for power to reveal Christ by kindness and forbearance.

"Many spasmodic efforts to reform are made, but those who make these efforts do not crucify self. They do not give themselves entirely into the hands of Christ, seeking for divine power to do His will. They are not willing to be molded after the divine similitude. In a general way they acknowledge their imperfections, but the particular sins are not given up." (This clearly shows that surrender has to do also with individual sins). "The enemy is willing that these spasmodic efforts should be made; for those who make them engage in no decided warfare against evil."

We see here that God calls for decided warfare against evil, which suggests consistent, earnest and resolute efforts to overcome sin. There is a warning given here for a class of people described as only making spasmodic efforts to overcome sin, based upon their inclination, who are not carrying repentance far enough (does this mean that they failed to repent of their disobedience in particular things?). What then can be said for the class of people who are studiously repressing every effort to war against evil in their character?

ST (cont.) "But a general conviction of sin is not reformative. We may have a vague, disagreeable sense of imperfection, but this will avail us nothing unless we make a decided effort to obtain the victory over sin. If we wish to cooperate with Christ, to overcome as He overcome, we must, in His strength, make the most determined resistance against self and selfishness."

Here again we see the principle of cooperation between human effort and divine power. Unless we put forth the efforts His power can avail nothing in overcoming our sins.

ST cont.) "If men and women will critically examine their conduct, measuring it by the law of Jehovah, they will see that sin is not limited to those things which the world condemns, but that selfishness and oppression, even in the smallest degree, are sins against God. They will see that by yielding to their inclinations, and refraining from obedience, they are depriving themselves of the richest blessings God can give."

ST April 1, 1897 "If you would work as Christ worked, if you would overcome as He overcame, go straight to Him for help needed to subdue the inclinations of the natural heart. Resist every sinful indulgence, every inclination to gratify wrong desires, remembering that Christ is all and in all, and that He is able to do 'exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.'"

CHAPTER FIVE: GENUINE OBEDIENCE IS NATURAL?

IMPULSIVE OBEDIENCE - GENUINE OBEDIENCE IS NATURAL

"Genuine obedience is natural. Natural obedience comes as a result of the faith relationship." FTW, 183.

[By this, Morrie means that genuine obedience comes naturally and spontaneously by itself. It will come easy to all who are "in Christ," without any effort on their part, ever.]

OBEDIENCE YES, BUT ONLY SPONTANEOUSLY

"Obedience is possible. Obedience is necessary. Obedience is important. If, we depend upon Jesus as He depended upon His Father, we will have Him dwelling in us and obedience will come naturally, spontaneously." FTW, 186. .

IMPULSIVE OBEDIENCE

"There is only one true kind of obedience. It is obedience that comes from being controlled by God. That sounds like impulsive obedience to me. Do you like the sound of impulsive obedience? Would I have to try hard to obey? I would have to try hard not to obey." 5 AUC CM.

SPONTANEOUS OVERCOMING: HOW TO OVERCOME ALCOHOLISM

"Because of her absolute surrender, her longing for drink left her completely. Why was this possible? Because she had admitted her sin and given up on herself and God could help her when she came to that point.

"Perhaps our problems aren't as noticeable as Alice's, but the principle remains the same. We cannot do anything ourselves apart from Christ. Yet we often hinder His power to help us by getting in the way."

"You see, there are two ways to fight God. There's the atheistic way in which the person says, 'I'm against God. In fact, I'm not even sure He exists. I'm fighting the idea that He cares about us and is active in our world.'

"The more subtle way is getting involved in His work, His business, trying to get His job done yourself." MCR, 130.

SPONTANEOUS FAITH: FAITH IS TOTALLY SPONTANEOUS

"One of the greatest evidences of genuine faith is that it is totally spontaneous. It is not something that we work on or something that we work up. If we could get that one point straight, it would save us from accepting the counterfeit faith so prevalent today." OOF, 19.

AUTOMATIC FAITH

"The methods of becoming acquainted with God are the elements of a vital devotional life. And when I am in a meaningful relationship with God, day by day, I learn to trust Him automatically, spontaneously, naturally. This is faith, trusting in its highest sense." MCR, 34.

FAITH A SPONTANEOUS QUALITY

"What we need to remember is that faith is never something we work on or something we work up. It is never self-generated. It is a spontaneous quality that comes from knowing God. Therefore, we don't put our attention toward getting faith, we put our attention toward knowing God, and the faith comes naturally." ROE, 101.

DEEPENING FAITH: DON'T EXPECT HELP

"Some have thought that the way to exercise faith is to force yourself to believe that something out of the ordinary is going to happen, or to get yourself into a bind, and then try to believe that God will help you out. But it is not exercising faith to write a rubber check, for example, and then wait to cover it. That's presumption. Any time that we attempt to increase our faith by struggling hard to make ourselves believe a certain thing is going to occur, we are not really exercising faith." OOF, 20.

DON'T TRY TO INCREASE FAITH

"Faith is a very misunderstood word. There are people who think that faith is something you work up, something you generate yourself. But I'd like to propose that faith is never worked up by the person, faith is the gift of God." TKG, 71.

BELIEVING: WORKING ON FAITH

"Genuine faith is never something that is worked up mentally. Try to make yourself believe something will happen, get yourself out on a limb, so God will work, pray for the sick, take their hand and say, 'Get up and walk.' But what if it doesn't happen?" 2 AUC CM.

MAKING YOURSELF BELIEVE SOMETHING

"The common denominator or counterfeit faith, regardless of what form it takes, is the idea that you can make yourself believe something and that if you believe hard enough this will cause God to move. It boils down to a type of mental gymnastics, or positive thinking, and perhaps its greatest danger is that it inevitably becomes self-centered, just as working hard on trying to overcome your sins makes you become self-centered." MCR, 23,24.

ABUNDANCE OF FORGIVENESS: FALSE OBEDIENCE.

"Shall we never (in this campmeeting series) talk about obedience? Yes, because there is false faith and false obedience and so we must talk about it. There is a nominal faith of most of the Christian world. That's why Ellen White talks so much about obedience. But if you have genuine faith, and if you believe by faith that you are genuinely forgiven, you don't ever have to worry about 'cheap grace,' as some people call it. [Luke 17:3-4] If I trespass against God seven times in a day, that He will turn. and forgive me seven times in a day? Do you believe that? Oh, won't that lead to cheap grace? Can you hear the 'cheap grace people' saying, 'That's good news; live it up, do what you want and so on.' Is that what happens?. God's forgiveness is unlimited for anyone who comes to Him. The more we are forgiven, the more we love and the more we love, the more we will keep His commandments." 3 AUC CM.

CHAPTER SIX: MORE DANGERS ACCORDING TO VENDEN

PHARISEEISM: TRYING TO GET OTHERS TO OBEY

"Another scripture, Matthew 23, describes the goodness of the Pharisees in Christ's day. Apparently their condition was the same as in Laodicea, and it has been a lasting problem, the great danger of depending upon our morality or external ethics to commend us to God. 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves' (verse 15). Christ declared that those who campaign for others to be externally good as they are themselves will only make them twofold worse off than themselves." SBF, 51.

LAODICEANISM: WHAT IS A LAODICEAN?

"Laodicea doesn't know that it is lukewarm. They take credit for external goodness. They think they are ready for Jesus' coming because they don't smoke, drink or dance. They think they are Christians because they wouldn't think of doing a heinous act or deed. Being good by not being bad in not being good." 1 AUC CM.

LAODICEA'S FORCED GOODNESS

"Laodicea's biggest problem is its self-sufficiency and resulting external goodness. It is known for its morality, but not for its genuine righteousness or for its faith. Therefore the goodness of Laodicea is forced, and God tells them what He thinks about their calculated goodness, He wishes they were either hot or cold. He considers external goodness worthless in terms of salvation and sanctification. Further, He declares that He is going to reject those who are only externally good, for He has no place for them." SBF, 51.

THE LAODICEANS: THE PROBLEM OF THE LAODICEANS

"The problem of the Laodiceans is not that they are short on works." G N, 82.

LAODICEA NEEDS TO REPENT OF MORALITY

"We need to understand what it is that Laodicea needs to repent of. It is not primarily immorality. Laodicea is quite moral. Laodicea is known for its external goodness. But in spite of that, the Saviour is standing on the outside, knocking, seeking admission. What Laodicea needs to repent of is its morality, its many good works apart from Jesus." FTW, 149.

[The sin of Laodicea Is worldliness and living apart from Jesus. Morris hardly ever speaks negatively about worldliness and sin. In his presentations, that which is dangerous is right doing, not wrong doing.]

THE LAODICEAN SIN

" There's only one answer. Laodiceans, lukewarm people, have gotten used to finding their security in something other than the righteousness of Christ, and faith and love and the Holy Spirit. They have found their security in the external things they have been doing. Strong people can find security in externals, because strong people can live good moral lives on the outside." TKG, 123.

LUKEWARMNESS: LUKEWARM AND LAODICEAN

"A lukewarm person [Is] one who is hot on the outside, but cold on the Inside. It's the kind of person who knows all the rules and regulations, who has beaten a hard path from his home to the church door, who knows all the forms and ceremonies, but who still keeps God at arm's length. The Laodicean is one who wouldn't think of doing anything wrong, who is trying is get to heaven by his good works, and who is so busy being good that he doesn't have time day by day to spend with God in His Word and in prayer." GN, 76.

[In his books, Venden consistently never mentions people who are worldly as being sinful; it is only the ones who are trying to obey God who are pictured as the bad people. To so delineate the situation occasionally is one thing, but to do it incessantly is quite another.]

WHAT IS LUKEWARM?

"What is lukewarm? It is a combination of hot and cold. Matthew 23 is a hard speech against the leaders. Good on the outside, but inside not good, whitewashed! It was not the Romans who crucified Jesus. It was the religious leaders of that day, Sabbath keepers, tithe payers, health reformers, faithful in family worship. They had to go back from the cross in time for family worship." 1 AUC CM.

[MY RESPONSE TO WHAT IS THE LAODICEAN CONDITION]

[Laodiceanism results from tuning, instead, to inner messages that unwittingly either make obedience the basis for our security or attempt to offer security by grace without obedience.]

The Laodicean message must be proclaimed with power; for now it is especially applicable. Now, more than ever before, are seen pride, worldly ambition, self-exaltation, double-dealing, hypocrisy, and deception. Many are speaking great swelling words of vanity, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Yet they are miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (RH Sept. 25, 1900). {7BC 962.8}

Let us make an application of the words of Christ to our own individual cases. Are we poor, and blind, and wretched, and miserable? Then let us seek the gold and white raiment that He offers. The work of overcoming is not restricted to the age of the martyrs. The conflict is for us, in these days of subtle temptation to worldliness, to self-security, to indulgence of pride, covetousness, false doctrines, and immorality of life (RH July 24, 1888). {7BC 966.3}

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The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to His people by ministers whom He has called to warn the people **is not a peace-and-safety message**. It is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular. The

people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as **in a position of carnal security**. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments.

What greater deception can come upon human minds than [BEGIN P.253] a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true condition of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct. {

It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, and who believe themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. **The unsanctified heart** is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." **I was shown that many are flattering themselves that they are good Christians, who have not a ray of light from Jesus. They have not a living experience for themselves in the divine life. They need a deep and thorough work of self-abasement before God before they will feel their true need of earnest, persevering effort to secure the precious graces of the Spirit.**

God leads His people on step by step. **The Christian life is a constant battle and a march. There is no rest from the warfare. It is by constant, unceasing effort that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan.** As a people we are triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain Scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and the spirit of sacrifice. **We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing.**

They [BEGIN P.254] think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. **They lack almost every qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth, which leads to lowliness of life and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements.**

In my last vision I was shown that even this decided message of the True Witness had not accomplished the design of God. **The people slumber on in their sins.** They continue to declare themselves rich and having need of nothing. **Many inquire: Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the Testimonies continually charge us with backsliding and with grievous sins? We love the truth; we are prospering; we are in no need of these testimonies of warning and reproof.** But let these murmurers see their hearts and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible, **let them humble their souls before God,** let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will realize their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness. These attainments are more precious than the gold of Ophir.

END OF MY RESPONSE TO LAODICEA]

INCREASING OUR LOVE FOR GOD

"Now let's talk about faith as one of the first things we need to leave the lukewarm condition. We should also dwell on love. Love is also spontaneous and natural when you get acquainted with someone. Trying to work on love is a dead end street," 3 AUC CM.

CHAPTER

SEVEN: HIS VIEW ON THE RIGHT EXERCISE OF THE WILL

HOW THE WILL OPERATES AFTER CONVERSION

"One of the probing questions that has frustrated Christians for years is the question of how the will operates after conversion. There have been debates and questions concerning the will, but most of the discussions have dealt with the use of the will before conversion. Very little has been done on the use of the will after conversion. One of our problems in trying to live the Christian life is that we often are found trying hard to do that which God has told us we cannot do, fight sin and the devil. And we do not put forth effort to do that which He has invited us to do, that is, seek communion with Him. This does not mean that works are unimportant, but we are talking about method. And the method of knowing God's gifts is by faith alone. As we put forth our effort to come to Jesus, and to keep coming to Jesus, He will fulfill His promise to work in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure." FTW, 193.

[Earlier Adventist speakers would base their studies on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, but the tendency now is to research out the modern theologians. And although they may have little to say about obedience in sanctification and the use of the will in sanctification, Ellen White surely has a lot to say on the topic!]

POWER OF CHOICE: SURRENDER IS GIVING UP YOUR POWER OF CHOICE

"Surrender is giving up our power of choice. 'Oh, but I'll be crippled!' Well, if God invites me to give up my power of choice, can't I leave the question of whether or not I'm going to be crippled up to Him? God invites us to surrender our will toward everything except the continuing relationship with Him." FTW, 171.

WE GO TO HIM; HE DOES THE REST

"So in the Christian experience of salvation by faith alone, we are to channel our power of choice and our willpower toward the continuing relationship of knowing God rather than directing it toward behavior. We can safely do so because when we choose the relationship, then God works in us to will (choose) and to do (behave)." SBF, 53.

[MY RESPONSE: But Jesus stated quite clearly that seeking is not enough, that we must strive also:

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Ellen White comments as follows on this verse Luke 13:24

"We are to strive, to agonize, to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. It will take something more than mere seeking to enter in at the strait gate; for the gate to death is wide, and the road broad, and easy of access, and many there be that go in thereat." {RH, July 5, 1892 par. 3}

And what is this work we must do, which involves more than seeking?

"When we read that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, then we want to understand what we shall do in order to succeed. This to us is a mournful statement, that there are those who will fail to enter in at the strait gate because they only seek to enter in, and do not strive. . . .

"The pitying Saviour stands right by your side to help you. He would send every angel out of glory while you are struggling to overcome sin, so that Satan cannot have the victory over you. Christ . . . took man's human nature upon Him that He might come right down to man in the temptation wherewith man is beset. The pitiful Redeemer knows just how to help us in every one of our strivings." {HP 263.6}

Elsewhere Ellen White again affirms that our part in salvation is the putting away of sin, through active cooperation with God's power:

"In the work of salvation the grace of Christ is united with a willing and obedient service, on the part of man. The sincerity of our profession of love to God will be made manifest by our earnest endeavors to fulfill the requirements of His law. Those who are the servants of God will renounce all evil habits and associations. There will be constant and earnest efforts made to lift up the soul from its defilement. . . .

"We are not to be altogether passive, thinking that there has been no task allotted to those who would win immortality. No, no; God calls upon us to do our best with the powers that He has given us to put to the stretch every faculty, and exercise every ability, that we may not fail of everlasting life. That man can be saved in indolence, in inactivity, is an utter impossibility. There is a constant conflict before those who would win eternal life. Faith and works go hand in hand. That man has nothing to do but to believe, is a fallacy and a most dangerous doctrine. . . ."

"You are to open the door of the heart. You are to clear away the rubbish from the portals, and throw wide the door, that the heavenly Guest may find a welcome and an entrance. Christ will not enter a heart that is defiled with sin. It is our work to put away all iniquity." {RH, October 30, 1888 par. 4}

Again we recall one of their claims: "Overcoming is God's department; it's not yours. . . . Victory isn't something that we strive for, try for, or work hard to get".

Reading the above inspired statements, we are forced to decide: Will we believe human theories, or the explicit counsel of God? **END MY RESPONSE]**

NO VICTORY THROUGH THE WILL

"An exercise of will power at that point [the point of temptation] might help me to stop from carrying out the deed, but it won't give me genuine victory because all true obedience comes from the heart." MCR, 160.

NO CHOICE ON THE FRUIT

"If we choose to abide in Him, we have no choice on the fruit. It will be the natural and spontaneous result of that abiding." TKG,110.

POWER OF THE WILL: ONLY APPARENT VICTORIES WITH THE BACKBONE

"The only thing that I can do with my backbone in handling temptations is to appear victorious on the outside." MCR, 160.

BEWARE OF THE STRONG WILLED WHO OBEY

"God wants us to surrender ourselves to Him, to give up on ourselves and on the idea that we can ever produce obedience. It was strong willed people who crucified Jesus when He was here. They were threatened by His acceptance of weak people. They didn't want to hear about surrendering themselves, giving up their will, their power of choice, to God. It is crucifying to admit that we cannot overcome sin, that we cannot obey, that we cannot produce righteousness, but that Jesus must do all of this for us" FTW, 172.

WILLPOWER: GETTING RID OF SIN ENDS UP IN WORSE CONDITION

"Whenever a person tries to push out sin by his own backbone and will power, he is going to end up in a worse condition than before. He may or may not go back to rock music. But he may go into deep pride because of his accomplishments. And pride is the worst of all sins. So, you see, the question of surrender can be very tricky if we think that it has to do primarily with giving up things" FTW, 169.

NO WILLPOWER LEFT OVER

"If you fight the fight of faith with all your willpower, you won't have any willpower left over for anything else!" FTW,106.

ALL OUR WILLPOWER

"If we direct all of our willpower toward seeking the faith relationship with Christ, we will have none left to fight sin and the devil. And that's how it should be, for Christ has promised to do this for us." FTW, 209.

DON'T BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

"The fight which I am to fight is "the good fight of faith," but the weapons of this warfare are not of the flesh. I do not believe in myself, and therefore I have no confidence in my own power to overcome evil." ROE, 104.

USE OF THE WILL: THE PROPER USE OF THE WILL,

"And the proper use of the will is in choosing to respond to God's knocking at the door for relationship with Him. If we will choose that, and continue to choose that, God will demonstrate in our lives more and more unto the perfect day, that He can do the willing and the doing through us concerning the fight of sin." FTW, 189."

ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO

"I'd like to close this chapter with the premise and conclusion that it is our choice to respond to which power is going to rule over us, and that is all we can do. If the concept makes me nervous, it's simply the rebellion of my pride and ego." SBF, 33.

HE DOES IT ALL-BUT ONE THING

"It is not true that Jesus does it all, because Jesus cannot seek Himself for us. Here is where our will and our willpower and our human effort has to go toward seeking Jesus in an ongoing relationship with Him every day. He does not do it all. He cannot seek Himself for us. But Jesus has promised that if we will seek relationship with Him, He will work to keep us from falling. And what Jesus has promised, He is able to perform. He does not need my help for that. So it is very crucial in coming to the place of overcoming sin that we understand clearly the difference between the fight of faith and the fight of sin," RO E, 105."

DEVELOPING WILLPOWER

AN ERROR TO DEVELOP WILLPOWER

"There was a time that whenever I came to page 47 of 'Steps to Christ,' I would say, 'Oh, THAT again,' and go on to the rest of the book. But then it said, 'You need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will.' And at that point I thought, 'well, that's my problem all right, I need more force to my will.' And with that gross misunderstanding, I again went to work to develop more willpower. I was trying to develop will power, what we call backbone but the will is the power of choice. Will and willpower are not the same. Usually we equate willpower with discipline and grit and determination. But the power of choice is something different. It is our decision making ability to do what you've decided upon." OOF, 49, 50..

SURRENDERING THE WILL-WHEN WE WILL GO ASTRAY

"Haven't you noticed, however, that if you've experienced enough of the folly of relying on yourself and your own decisions, you don't want to ask for your power of choice back? Have you ever gone astray so much and so often in using your will and willpower on your own that you didn't want to employ it that way any more?" SBF, 53.

THE NATURE OF SURRENDER'

"Some may say, 'If I'm supposed to give up my will, that sounds as though I'm going to go through life maimed and crippled.' Some become extremely nervous at the idea. But that's exactly what surrender is all about, the submitting of our will. High achievers, capable people, brilliant performers will find it most disconcerting and even become angry at it. But surrender is giving up our power of choice to God." OOF,39.

A PASSIVE THING

"An instrument is a passive thing, but many of us fear the word passive. When we speak of the surrender of the will, ordinarily no one has any problem. But if we mention any giving up of the power of choice, people's faces cloud up." OOF, 48,49.

[MY RESPONSE TO THE USE OF THE WILL] The concept presented in the book is that the will, or power of choice, can only be used in the realm of choosing 'relationship' through Bible study and prayer. The will is not supposed to be used in the area of fighting against sin. This means that sin in behavior and actions is

outside the realm in which the will is to be used. The explanation given is that Christ takes care of sins in our performance if we use our will in Bible study and prayer. (See MCR pages 119, 124, 128, 132, 142, 154, 160).

But the truth is that in order to overcome our sins in our thoughts and actions, we must use our will in these areas as well as in Bible study and prayer. It is imperative that we realize that the will is the spring of all our actions. (5 T 515). This means that the will has a most vital role in the realm of obedience and disobedience.

Notice how clearly this is described in the following;

3T 488 "The necessity for men of this generation to call to the aid the power of the will, strengthened by the grace of God, in order to withstand the temptations of Satan, and resist the least indulgence of perverted appetite is twice as great as it was several generations ago. But the present generation have less power of self-control than had those who lived then. Those who have indulged the appetite for stimulants have transmitted their depraved appetites and passions to their children, and greater moral power is required to resist intemperance in all its forms."

MCP 687 "It is our privilege, as children of God, to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. At times the masterly power of temptation seems to tax our willpower to the uttermost, and to exercise faith seems utterly contrary to all the evidences of sense or emotion; but our will must be kept on God's side."

4T 215 "You should call a determined will to your aid in the warfare against your own inclinations and propensities."

5T 675 "The question to be settled with them (those who reject the Testimonies because their sins are reprov'd by them) is, Shall I deny myself and receive as of God the Testimonies which reprove my sins, or shall I reject the Testimonies because they reprove my sins? In many cases the Testimonies are fully received, the sin and indulgence are broken off, and reformation at once commences in harmony with the light God has given. In other instances, sinful indulgences are cherished, the Testimonies are rejected, and many excuses which are untrue are offered to others as the reason for refusing to receive them. The true reason is not given. It is a lack of moral courage, a will, strengthened and controlled by the Spirit of God, to renounce hurtful habits."

On page 134 it is stated that sin is crowded out by Christ; it is not stamped out by us. It is true that we have not power to get rid of sin in our lives, and it is true in a sense that sin is crowded out by Christ, but the way that it is stated, and the context it is placed in, makes it sound like we have no direct involvement in getting rid of sin. It overlooks the fact that even though it is God's power being utilized, it is our act requiring our effort that brings victory in overcoming sin and resisting temptation.

DA 1466 "The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God."

Here we see that there is a union of divine power and human effort that must take place at the point of temptation in order for victory to be gained. Yet nowhere in the book is it recognized that it is possible to put forth human efforts in the power of Christ to overcome sins. The principle of cooperation of human and divine is brought out in many instances in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Philippians 2:12, 13 "...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."

MYP 147 "When the four Hebrew youth were receiving an education for the king's court in Babylon, they did not feel that the blessing of the Lord was a substitute for the taxing effort required of them. They were diligent in study; for they discerned that their destiny depended upon their own will and action.... While these youth were working out their own salvation, God was working in them to will and to do of

His good pleasure. Here are revealed the conditions of success. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort."

2T 506 "To retain pure and undefiled religion, it is necessary to be workers, persevering in effort. We must do something ourselves. No one else can do our work. None but ourselves can work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is the very work which the Lord has left for us to do."

PP 248-249 "In order to receive God's help, man must realize his weakness and deficiency; he must apply his own mind to the great change to be wrought in himself; he must be aroused to earnest and persevering prayer and effort. Wrong habits and customs must be shaken off; and it is only by determined endeavor to correct these errors and to conform to right principles that the victory can be gained. Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and **God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort."**

There is no question but that man's efforts in his own power are of no avail, but we miss the very central issue in how to overcome if we fail to see that man's effort with God's power is abundantly able to gain the victory in fighting against sin. It should be equally clear that God's power without man's effort to overcome sin in his life will not bring victory either. Stories that we read or hear about how certain individuals who gave up fighting against sin, and then in response to their request had the desires for some particular indulgence suddenly and miraculously removed so that the indulgence became repulsive to them, are very misleading.

Satan is the one who brings strong temptations, and when it serves his purpose to remove the temptation he can readily do so. Satan can fasten individuals more firmly in his grasp by doing this in answer to their request because this leads them to expect that the way to overcome temptation is to have it removed. Then when some temptation does persist and isn't miraculously removed in answer to prayer the natural conclusion is that it must not be that important an issue, perhaps not sin at all.

To illustrate: A person has developed a habit of smoking, and wishes to quit, but is not able to successfully resist the habit he has cultivated. So he prays for God to take care of it and it instantly and spontaneously vanishes. Smoking suddenly becomes repulsive to him, he can't stand the smell of it. Later he discovers that his gambling habit is not the best for his spiritual life and he asks God to take care of that; the desire and impulsive habit that he has developed through years of yielding to temptation is again miraculously taken away. Later he learns that God's Sabbath day is the seventh day instead of the first. Should he wait to harmonize his life with what he has learned until God removes all desires and inclinations to break the Sabbath? Is he to wait until his desires and inclinations are changed before changing his actions? Satan is playing the bigger game for our lives. **If he can lead us by some experiences of this kind to expect that we will overcome sin by having the desires that we have cultivated for it suddenly removed, then he knows that down the road when we meet some major issue, that he will have us, for we will be expecting to deal with that issue the same way, and when the temptation persists we will continue giving in waiting to such a time as God would see fit (it is presumed) to take it away.**

TM 453 "Do not think that God will work a miracle to save those weak souls who cherish evil, who practice sin; or that some supernatural element will be brought into their lives, lifting them out of self into a higher sphere, where it will be comparatively easy work, without any special effort, any special fighting, without any crucifixion of self; because all who dally on Satan's ground for this to be done will perish with the evildoers,"

It is plain that God wishes our actions to be governed by our knowledge of His will, rather than by how our feeling and inclinations go. It is our privilege, through His grace, to be able to do what is right even when we don't feel like it.

The concepts in the book would deprive us of the means by which to utilize God's power for overcoming sin, while leading us to believe that we are surrendering the battle into God's hands and giving up self. Truly, is this not confusing the work of the Holy Spirit with the work of Satan?

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most devastating aspect of the concepts presented by Venden is that they minimize the practical application of God's character as revealed through His law, in our lives. At the same time God's righteousness is extolled and the requirement of perfect holiness apparently exalted. These concepts lead a person to think that he is choosing Christ, when in actuality he can be rejecting Him. And it is exceedingly difficult, and almost impossible to convince him otherwise, when once he has fully accepted this philosophy. (See Matthew 7:21). But what good is exalting the requirement of holiness if you discourage people from comparing their lives with it? In so doing you effectively obscure the only method by which it is to be obtained, while presenting a different method. This is actually a way of running away from Christ that passes as a way of seeking Him! How misleading! It only serves to make the error more difficult to recognize. We should beware of any teaching that belittles effort to keep God's law and overcome sin. This does not mean that every teaching that advises us to put effort in to good works is of God; it is only saying that every teaching that tells us not to put effort into obedience is erroneous. No matter how logical and conclusive the arguments presented in support may seem, when the conclusion is wrong the reasoning is wrong. For correct views on the topic of Sanctification, we should read the little book, THE SANCTIFIED LIFE by Ellen G. White.

We will conclude this review with a portion of an article that appeared in the early Adventist journal SIGNS OF THE TIMES, Nov. 14, 1892. The reprints do not contain the name of the author, but it is apparent that the article was written to meet the same concepts as are currently being promoted under the title of Sanctification By Faith Alone. Some additional statements on effort follow the excerpt from SIGNS.

Excerpt from SIGNS OF THE TIMES, Nov. 14, 1892

"The word of God is the only basis of faith. The counterfeit article which often passes for faith is merely human speculation; it will never profit its possessor; it rests on imaginations suggested by the arch-deceiver, and the end will be ruin, disappointment and death.

When God's word is received in the heart, it works at once, operates, governs, and controls the man. There is a danger at this point of man's thinking that when the work is wrought, he himself has done it. But let us note carefully how the work is brought about. We have just seen that faith works; and the cause of faith is the word of God. When the word--the word of God spoken through holy prophets of old--is received in the heart, it constitutes a living, acting principle. This principle is undying and all powerful, 'for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.' The gospel is conveyed to man in words—just such words as men speak; but gospel words were first spoken by God, and the one who receives these words, receives in them, and with them, the mighty life-giving power of God. He may resist this power so that it will not work effectually, but if he gladly lets the word of life operate, he will find that it works the works of God in him. And when this is true, it will not be the man who does the work, but it will be God working in him, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'

When the rewards are given, it will be to 'every man according as his work shall be.' Rev. 22:12. The Psalmist prayed: 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.' Psal. 90:17. David saw that man could do nothing except God worked in and through him. And the work which God sees fit to perform through the weak frame of mortal flesh is to be established upon man; it is to be reckoned to man as though he had wrought it himself; for at the judgement the result is to be given to him for his own. It is, however, wrought in man by Christ, and when it is given to him for his own, he is rewarded for what has been wrought through him.

Let no one think for one moment that his salvation depends upon what he can do himself. If you are saved, it will be through faith on the Son of God who gave himself for you, and not alone for you, but for both you and your sin. You cannot free yourself from one single sin, not even the stain of a sin. It requires the blood of Christ, and His blood has been given for that very purpose, that He might 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Titus 2:14. He accepts sinners, and if they submit themselves to him, he will cleanse them from all their sins, keep them from sinning, energize them by His Spirit, and then work in them the works of God. Christ will work in man, as God worked in Christ when He was upon the earth.

Christ totally denied any power exhibited in His life as being of Himself; and He is our example. He said: 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' 'I have not spoken of Myself.' And again, 'The Father that dwelleth in me, He (the Father) doeth the works.' John 5:30; 12:49; 14:10. These statements are from the lips of the Saviour. Do you believe them? Do you think it possible for the servant to do what the Master did not, and that which He could not? Individually, let us accept the truth that man can do nothing, and let us believe that God will work in us that which pleases Him, even as He wrought in Christ. Then shall the works of God appear; self will die-- be crucified daily—and Christ will live within us, as he did in Paul, the hope of glory.

Mark this, there is work, yea, much work to be done, and God's way is for us to submit ourselves to Him, that He may work through us. Look at the mighty apostle Paul, for he worked in labours more abundant than all, and yet he was dead; but Christ was living in him, and by Christ were the works of Paul wrought. The only thing required of us is that we let God have His way and purpose in us. But with the evident truth that we can do nothing, and that God expects nothing of us,—the fallen mortal man,—let us not again be deceived in thinking that it is self that is trying to work when the impulse to do good is felt, and that therefore we must repress it, thinking to wait till Christ shall work in us with some irresistible power. From the point of surrender Christ stands ready to will and to work, and we should recognize both the desire to do, and the power to do, as coming from God, for He designs both to 'will' and 'work' in us effectually and mightily.

It may appear to others that we are doing, and we may deceive ourselves by thinking so, but it is not of ourselves, it is God working in us. It matters not what others may think; but if we deceive ourselves upon this point, we take credit and glory to self that belong to God, setting self in the place of God, attempting to do what God only can do, hence frustrating and defeating the purpose of God. Friends, brethren, sisters, one and all, let God work."

ELLEN WHITE STATEMENTS ON EFFORT

5T 371-372 "Our habits must be brought into conformity to the will of Cod. We are assured, "It is God which worketh in you," but man must do his part in controlling appetite and passion. The religious life requires the action of the mind and heart in harmony with the divine forces. No man can of himself work out his own salvation, and God cannot do this work for him without his cooperation. But when man works earnestly, God works with him, giving him power to become a son of God."

5T 345 "You may professedly believe every point of present truth, but unless you practice these truths it will avail you nothing."

MLT 99 "The child of God will not rest satisfied until he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ and sustained by His life-giving power. When he sees a weakness in his character, it is not enough to confess it again and again; he must go to work with determination and energy to overcome his defects by building up opposite traits of character. He will not shun this work because it is difficult. Untiring energy is required of the Christian; but he is not obliged to work in his own strength; divine power awaits his demand. Everyone who is sincerely striving for the victory over self will appropriate the promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee'. Through personal effort joined with the prayer of faith the soul is trained.... It may cost a severe conflict to overcome habits which have been long indulged, but we may triumph through the grace of Christ."

4T 654 "There are few who form evil habits deliberately. By frequent repetition of wrong acts, habits are formed unconsciously, and become so firmly established that the most persistent effort is required to effect a change. We should never be slow in breaking up a sinful habit. Unless evil habits are conquered, they will conquer us, and destroy our happiness,"

MLT 104 "God calls upon every young man and young woman to renounce every evil habit, to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Jesus will help you, so that you need not remain in indolence, making no effort to correct your wrongs and improve your conduct. The sincerity of your prayers will be proved by the vigor of the effort you make to obey all of God's commandments.... Do not excuse your defects of character, but in the grace of Christ overcome them, Wrestle with the evil passions which the Word of God condemns...."

6T 410 "'Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' Mark 14:38. Watch against the stealthy approach of the enemy, watch against old habits and natural inclinations, lest they assert themselves; force them back, and watch. Watch the thoughts, watch the plans, lest they become self-centered. Watch over the souls whom Christ has purchased with His own blood, Watch for opportunities to do them good."

I believe what Morris Venden presents is not true Seventh-day Adventism. It is a Seventh-day Adventist version of the popular Protestant belief of faith without works, but it is contrary to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. I believe that those who espouse these concepts will eventually be forced to come to the point of either giving up the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy and true Seventh-day Adventism, or of recognizing the error of these concepts, and reject them. **END OF MY RESPONSE TO THE USE OF THE WILL]**

NO RESPONSIBILITY

WE DO NOT HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OBEYING

"It is of the utmost importance to realize that Jesus is not placing the responsibility of our works or our fruit bearing, upon us. While it is true that we are to bear fruit, it is also true that it is accomplished by faith alone in Him." TKG, 110.

[MY RESPONSE]

[Responsibility is closely related to control. According to Venden, mankind (with the exception of Christ who was not like man) has had no control over his moral actions, even after surrendering to Christ, since the Garden of Eden when Adam first fell. We are totally helpless in our sins and must let Him miraculously remove the temptations and smooth the way so we will easily want to obey Him and "keep His commandments." All this must be without any personal conflict or "fight" or effort on our part. We are totally powerless to resist sin, any sin that comes our way. Because we have no moral control over ourselves, this side of the Second Advent, we therefore have no responsibility for our moral actions as long as we have accepted Christ as our Saviour and remain with Him. There is a final generation that obeys God fully, it will have to come as a by-product of Divinely controlled will automation. Read again that excellent study "The Error of Original Sin," written by Elder Ralph Larson, if you wish to better understand the philosophical basis underlying this deadly error.]END OF MY RESPONSE]

CRUCIFYING SELF-IT IS CRUCIFYING TO GIVE UP ON OBEYING HIM

"It is crucifying to admit that we cannot overcome sin, that we cannot obey, that we cannot produce righteousness, but that Jesus must do all of this for us." FTW, 172.

BEARING THE CROSS--GIVING UP, NOT SIN BUT SELF

"Jesus said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny ' What? 'himself.' Sometimes we read other things in there. Let him deny this or that or the other habit or practice or thing. I used to think that the cross was making myself not do something I really liked to do. I've heard other people say it too. 'My cross is giving up my dancing. I can't dance anymore. I sure wish I could, but that's my cross.' That is not what Jesus is talking about. No, the cross is to deny self. Let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. The cross is not refusing to do something we would like to do. It's denying ourselves." FTW, 85.

PEOPLE THAT DON'T WANT TO BEAR THE CROSS

"When we discover that we can do nothing but fall at Jesus' feet in humility and admit that we can't produce anything, then it becomes too heavy a cross to bear. But the cross is the essence of surrender, what it is all about. It involves giving up totally on self." OpF, 41;

[Venden's "cross-bearing" means being willing to stop trying to do right]

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHRISTIAN LIFE SUMMED UP IN RELATIONSHIP ONLY

"When we seek Jesus we learn to trust Him, this allows Him to do the work in battling the enemy that so many of us have tried with ill success. And if we will fight the fight of faith, He has promised that He will fight the fight of sin. For a long time some of us became so involved in the fight of sin we had no time or energy left for the fight of faith. Have you ever been in that trap? One of the reasons that the Christian life is so deplorably hard is because we get involved in the wrong fight, the wrong battle, and we fight the battle where the battle isn't instead of where it is. The Christian life, and salvation, is summed up in relationship only, if relationship is properly defined and understood." FTW, 84.

CHAPTER

SEVEN: HIS VIEW ON THE RIGHT EXERCISE OF THE WILL

HOW THE WILL OPERATES AFTER CONVERSION

"One of the probing questions that has frustrated Christians for years is the question of how the will operates after conversion. There have been debates and questions concerning the will, but most of the discussions have dealt with the use of the will before conversion. Very little has been done on the use of the will after conversion. One of our problems in trying to live the Christian life is that we often are found trying hard to do that which God has told us we cannot do, fight sin and the devil. And we do not put forth effort to do that which He has invited us to do, that is, seek communion with Him. This does not mean that works are unimportant, but we are talking about method. And the method of knowing God's gifts is by faith alone. As we put forth our effort to come to Jesus, and to keep coming to Jesus, He will fulfill His promise to work in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure." FTW, 193.

[Earlier Adventist speakers would base their studies on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, but the tendency now is to research out the modern theologians. And although they may have little to say about obedience in sanctification and the use of the will in sanctification, Ellen White surely has a lot to say on the topic!]

POWER OF CHOICE: SURRENDER IS GIVING UP YOUR POWER OF CHOICE

"Surrender is giving up our power of choice. 'Oh, but I'll be crippled!' Well, if God invites me to give up my power of choice, can't I leave the question of whether or not I'm going to be crippled up to Him? God invites us to surrender our will toward everything except the continuing relationship with Him." FTW, 171.

WE GO TO HIM; HE DOES THE REST

"So in the Christian experience of salvation by faith alone, we are to channel our power of choice and our willpower toward the continuing relationship of knowing God rather than directing it toward behavior. We can safely do so because when we choose the relationship, then God works in us to will (choose) and to do (behave)." SBF, 53.

[MY RESPONSE: But Jesus stated quite clearly that seeking is not enough, that we must strive also:

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Ellen White comments as follows on this verse Luke 13:24

"We are to strive, to agonize, to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. It will take something more than mere seeking to enter in at the strait gate; for the gate to death is wide, and the road broad, and easy of access, and many there be that go in thereat." {RH, July 5, 1892 par. 3}

And what is this work we must do, which involves more than seeking?

"When we read that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, then we want to understand what we shall do in order to succeed. This to us is a mournful statement, that there are those who will fail to enter in at the strait gate because they only seek to enter in, and do not strive. . . ."

"The pitying Saviour stands right by your side to help you. He would send every angel out of glory while you are struggling to overcome sin, so that Satan cannot have the

victory over you. Christ . . . took man's human nature upon Him that He might come right down to man in the temptation wherewith man is beset. The pitiful Redeemer knows just how to help us in every one of our strivings." {HP 263.6}

Elsewhere Ellen White again affirms that our part in salvation is the putting away of sin, through active cooperation with God's power:

"In the work of salvation the grace of Christ is united with a willing and obedient service, on the part of man. The sincerity of our profession of love to God will be made manifest by our earnest endeavors to fulfill the requirements of His law. Those who are the servants of God will renounce all evil habits and associations. There will be constant and earnest efforts made to lift up the soul from its defilement. . . .

"We are not to be altogether passive, thinking that there has been no task allotted to those who would win immortality. No, no; God calls upon us to do our best with the powers that He has given us to put to the stretch every faculty, and exercise every ability, that we may not fail of everlasting life. That man can be saved in indolence, in inactivity, is an utter impossibility. There is a constant conflict before those who would win eternal life. Faith and works go hand in hand. That man has nothing to do but to believe, is a fallacy and a most dangerous doctrine. . . .

"You are to open the door of the heart. You are to clear away the rubbish from the portals, and throw wide the door, that the heavenly Guest may find a welcome and an entrance. Christ will not enter a heart that is defiled with sin. It is our work to put away all iniquity." {RH, October 30, 1888 par. 4}

Again we recall one of their claims: "Overcoming is God's department; it's not yours. . . . Victory isn't something that we strive for, try for, or work hard to get".

Reading the above inspired statements, we are forced to decide: Will we believe human theories, or the explicit counsel of God? **END MY RESPONSE]**

NO VICTORY THROUGH THE WILL

"An exercise of will power at that point [the point of temptation] might help me to stop from carrying out the deed, but it won't give me genuine victory because all true obedience comes from the heart." MCR, 160.

NO CHOICE ON THE FRUIT

"If we choose to abide in Him, we have no choice on the fruit. It will be the natural and spontaneous result of that abiding." TKG, 110.

POWER OF THE WILL: ONLY APPARENT VICTORIES WITH THE BACKBONE

"The only thing that I can do with my backbone in handling temptations is to appear victorious on the outside." MCR, 160.

BEWARE OF THE STRONG WILLED WHO OBEY

"God wants us to surrender ourselves to Him, to give up on ourselves and on the idea that we can ever produce obedience. It was strong willed people who crucified Jesus when He was here. They were threatened by His acceptance of weak people. They didn't want to hear about surrendering themselves, giving up their will, their power of choice, to God. It is crucifying to admit that we cannot overcome sin, that we cannot obey, that we cannot produce righteousness, but that Jesus must do all of this for us" FTW, 172.

WILLPOWER: GETTING RID OF SIN ENDS UP IN WORSE CONDITION

"Whenever a person tries to push out sin by his own backbone and will power, he is going to end up in a worse condition than before. He may or may not go back to rock music. But he may go into deep pride because of his accomplishments. And pride is the worst of all sins. So, you see, the question of surrender can be very tricky if we think that it has to do primarily with giving up things" FTW, 169.

NO WILLPOWER LEFT OVER

"If you fight the fight of faith with all your willpower, you won't have any willpower left over for anything else!" FTW, 106.

ALL OUR WILLPOWER

"If we direct all of our willpower toward seeking the faith relationship with Christ, we will have none left to fight sin and the devil. And that's how it should be, for Christ has promised to do this for us." FTW, 209.

DON'T BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

"The fight which I am to fight is 'the good fight of faith,' but the weapons of this warfare are not of the flesh. I do not believe in myself, and therefore I have no confidence in my own power to overcome evil." ROE, 104.

USE OF THE WILL: THE PROPER USE OF THE WILL,

"And the proper use of the will is in choosing to respond to God's knocking at the door for relationship with Him. If we will choose that, and continue to choose that, God will demonstrate in our lives more and more unto the perfect day, that He can do the willing and the doing through us concerning the fight of sin." FTW, 189."

ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO

"I'd like to close this chapter with the premise and conclusion that it is our choice to respond to which power is going to rule over us, and that is all we can do. If the concept makes me nervous, it's simply the rebellion of my pride and ego." SBF, 33.

HE DOES IT ALL-BUT ONE THING

"It is not true that Jesus does it all, because Jesus cannot seek Himself for us. Here is where our will and our willpower and our human effort has to go toward seeking Jesus in an ongoing relationship with Him every day. He does not do it all. He cannot seek Himself for us. But Jesus has promised that if we will seek relationship with Him, He will work to keep us from falling. And what Jesus has promised, He is able to perform. He does not need my help for that. So it is very crucial in coming to the place of overcoming sin that we understand clearly the difference between the fight of faith and the fight of sin," ROE, 105."

DEVELOPING WILLPOWER

AN ERROR TO DEVELOP WILLPOWER

"There was a time that whenever I came to page 47 of 'Steps to Christ,' I would say, 'Oh, THAT again,' and go on to the rest of the book. But then it said, 'You need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will.' And at that point I thought, 'well, that's my problem all right, I need more force to my will.' And with that gross misunderstanding, I again went to work to develop more willpower. I was trying to develop will power, what we call backbone but the will is the power of choice. Will and willpower are not the same. Usually we equate willpower with discipline and grit and determination. But the power of choice is something different. It is our decision making ability to do what you've decided upon." OOF, 49, 50..

SURRENDERING THE WILL-WHEN WE WILL GO ASTRAY

"Haven't you noticed, however, that if you've experienced enough of the folly of relying on yourself and your own decisions, you don't want to ask for your power of choice back? Have you ever gone astray so much and so often in using your will and willpower on your own that you didn't want to employ it that way any more?" SBF, 53.

THE NATURE OF SURRENDER'

"Some may say, 'If I'm supposed to give up my will, that sounds as though I'm going to go through life maimed and crippled.' Some become extremely nervous at the idea. But that's exactly what surrender is all about, the submitting of our will. High achievers, capable people, brilliant performers will find it most disconcerting and even become angry at it. But surrender is giving up our power of choice to God." OOF, 39.

A PASSIVE THING

"An instrument is a passive thing, but many of us fear the word passive. When we speak of the surrender of the will, ordinarily no one has any problem. But if we mention any giving up of the power of choice, people's faces cloud up." OOF, 48,49.

[MY RESPONSE TO THE USE OF THE WILL] The concept presented in the book is that the will, or power of choice, can only be used in the realm of choosing 'relationship' through Bible study and prayer. The will is not supposed to be used in the area of fighting against sin. This means that sin in behavior and actions is outside the realm in which the will is to be used. The explanation given is that Christ takes care of sins in our performance if we use our will in Bible study and prayer. (See MCR pages 119, 124, 128, 132, 142, 154, 160).

But the truth is that in order to overcome our sins in our thoughts and actions, we must use our will in these areas as well as in Bible study and prayer. It is imperative that we realize that the will is the spring of all our actions. (5 T 515). This means that the will has a most vital role in the realm of obedience and disobedience.

Notice how clearly this is described in the following;

3T 488 "The necessity for men of this generation to call to the aid the power of the will, strengthened by the grace of God, in order to withstand the temptations of Satan, and resist the least indulgence of perverted appetite is twice as great as it was several generations ago. But the present generation have less power of self-control than had those who lived then. Those who have indulged the appetite for stimulants have transmitted their depraved appetites and passions to their children, and greater moral power is required to resist intemperance in all its forms."

MCP 687 "It is our privilege, as children of God, to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. At times the masterly power of temptation seems to tax our willpower to the uttermost, and to exercise faith seems utterly contrary to all the evidences of sense or emotion; but our will must be kept on God's side."

4T 215 "You should call a determined will to your aid in the warfare against your own inclinations and propensities."

5T 675 "The question to be settled with them (those who reject the Testimonies because their sins are reproved by them) is, Shall I deny myself and receive as of God the Testimonies which reprove my sins, or shall I reject the Testimonies because they reprove my sins? In many cases the Testimonies are fully received, the sin and indulgence are broken off, and reformation at once commences in harmony with the light God has given. In other instances, sinful indulgences are cherished, the Testimonies are rejected, and many excuses which are untrue are offered to others as the reason for refusing to receive them. The true reason is not given. It is a lack of moral courage, a will, strengthened and controlled by the Spirit of God, to renounce hurtful habits."

On page 134 it is stated that sin is crowded out by Christ; it is not stamped out by us. It is true that we have not power to get rid of sin in our lives, and it is true in a sense that sin is crowded out by Christ, but the way that it is stated, and the context it is placed in, makes it sound like we have no direct involvement in getting rid of sin. It overlooks the fact that even though it is God's power being utilized, it is our act requiring our effort that brings victory in overcoming sin and resisting temptation.

DA 1466 "The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God."

Here we see that there is a union of divine power and human effort that must take place at the point of temptation in order for victory to be gained. Yet nowhere in the book is it recognized that it is possible to put forth human efforts in the power of Christ to overcome sins. The principle of cooperation of human and divine is brought out in many instances in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Philippians 2:12, 13 "...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."

MYP 147 "When the four Hebrew youth were receiving an education for the king's court in Babylon, they did not feel that the blessing of the Lord was a substitute for the taxing effort required of them. They were diligent in study; for they discerned that their destiny depended upon their own will and action.... While these youth were working out their own salvation, God was working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. Here are revealed the conditions of success. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort."

2T 506 "To retain pure and undefiled religion, it is necessary to be workers, persevering in effort. We must do something ourselves. No one else can do our work. None but ourselves can work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is the very work which the Lord has left for us to do."

PP 248-249 "In order to receive God's help, man must realize his weakness and deficiency; he must apply his own mind to the great change to be wrought in himself; he must be aroused to earnest and persevering prayer and effort. Wrong habits and customs must be shaken off; and it is only by determined endeavor to correct these errors and to conform to right principles that the victory can be gained. Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and **God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort.**"

There is no question but that man's efforts in his own power are of no avail, but we miss the very central issue in how to overcome if we fail to see that man's effort with God's power is abundantly able to gain the victory in fighting against sin. It should be equally clear that God's power without man's effort to overcome sin in his life will not bring victory either. Stories that we read or hear about how certain individuals who gave up fighting against sin, and then in response to their request had the desires for some particular indulgence suddenly and miraculously removed so that the indulgence became repulsive to them, are very misleading.

Satan is the one who brings strong temptations, and when it serves his purpose to remove the temptation he can readily do so. Satan can fasten individuals more firmly in his grasp by doing this in answer to their request because this leads them to expect that the way to overcome temptation is to have it removed. Then when some temptation does persist and isn't miraculously removed in answer to prayer the natural conclusion is that it must not be that important an issue, perhaps not sin at all.

To illustrate: A person has developed a habit of smoking, and wishes to quit, but is not able to successfully resist the habit he has cultivated. So he prays for God to take care of it and it instantly and spontaneously vanishes. Smoking suddenly becomes repulsive to him, he can't stand the smell of it. Later he discovers that his gambling habit is not the best for his spiritual life and he asks God to take care of that; the desire and impulsive habit that he has developed through years of yielding to temptation is again miraculously taken away. Later he learns that God's Sabbath day is the seventh day instead of the first. Should he wait to harmonize his life with what he has learned until God removes all desires and inclinations to break the Sabbath? Is he to wait until his desires and inclinations are changed before changing his actions? Satan is playing the bigger game for our lives. **If he can lead us by some experiences of this kind to expect that we will overcome sin by having the desires that we have cultivated for it suddenly removed, then he knows that down the road when we meet some major issue, that he will have us, for we will be expecting to deal with that issue the same way, and when the temptation persists we will continue giving in waiting to such a time as God would see fit (it is presumed) to take it away.**

TM 453 "Do not think that God will work a miracle to save those weak souls who cherish evil, who practice sin; or that some supernatural element will be brought into their lives, lifting them out of self into a higher

sphere, where it will be comparatively easy work, without any special effort, any special fighting, without any crucifixion of self; because all who dally on Satan's ground for this to be done will perish with the evildoers,"

It is plain that God wishes our actions to be governed by our knowledge of His will, rather than by how our feeling and inclinations go. It is our privilege, through His grace, to be able to do what is right even when we don't feel like it.

The concepts in the book would deprive us of the means by which to utilize God's power for overcoming sin, while leading us to believe that we are surrendering the battle into God's hands and giving up self. Truly, is this not confusing the work of the Holy Spirit with the work of Satan?

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most devastating aspect of the concepts presented by Venden is that they minimize the practical application of God's character as revealed through His law, in our lives. At the same time God's righteousness is extolled and the requirement of perfect holiness apparently exalted. These concepts lead a person to think that he is choosing Christ, when in actuality he can be rejecting Him. And it is exceedingly difficult, and almost impossible to convince him otherwise, when once he has fully accepted this philosophy. (See Matthew 7:21). But what good is exalting the requirement of holiness if you discourage people from comparing their lives with it? In so doing you effectively obscure the only method by which it is to be obtained, while presenting a different method. This is actually a way of running away from Christ that passes as a way of seeking Him! How misleading! It only serves to make the error more difficult to recognize. We should beware of any teaching that belittles effort to keep God's law and overcome sin. This does not mean that every teaching that advises us to put effort in to good works is of God; it is only saying that every teaching that tells us not to put effort into obedience is erroneous. No matter how logical and conclusive the arguments presented in support may seem, when the conclusion is wrong the reasoning is wrong. For correct views on the topic of Sanctification, we should read the little book, THE SANCTIFIED LIFE by Ellen G. White.

We will conclude this review with a portion of an article that appeared in the early Adventist journal SIGNS OF THE TIMES, Nov. 14, 1892. The reprints do not contain the name of the author, but it is apparent that the article was written to meet the same concepts as are currently being promoted under the title of Sanctification By Faith Alone. Some additional statements on effort follow the excerpt from SIGNS.

Excerpt from SIGNS OF THE TIMES, Nov. 14, 1892

"The word of God is the only basis of faith. The counterfeit article which often passes for faith is merely human speculation; it will never profit its possessor; it rests on imaginations suggested by the arch-deceiver, and the end will be ruin, disappointment and death.

When God's word is received in the heart, it works at once, operates, governs, and controls the man. There is a danger at this point of man's thinking that when the work is wrought, he himself has done it. But let us note carefully how the work is brought about. We have just seen that faith works; and the cause of faith is the word of God. When the word--the word of God spoken through holy prophets of old--is received in the heart, it constitutes a living, acting principle. This principle is undying and all powerful, 'for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.' The gospel is conveyed to man in words—just such words as men speak; but gospel words were first spoken by God, and the one who receives these words, receives in them, and with them, the mighty life-giving power of God. He may resist this power so that it will not work effectually, but if he gladly lets the word of life operate, he will find that it works the works of God in him. And when this is true, it will not be the man who does the work, but it will be God working in him, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'

When the rewards are given, it will be to 'every man according as his work shall be.' Rev. 22:12. The Psalmist prayed: 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.' Psal. 90:17. David saw that man could do nothing except God worked in and through him. And the work which God sees fit to perform through the weak frame of mortal flesh is to be established upon man; it is to be reckoned to man as though he had wrought it himself; for at the judgement the result is to be given to him for his own. It is, however, wrought in man by Christ, and when it is given to him for his own, he is rewarded for what has been wrought through him.

Let no one think for one moment that his salvation depends upon what he can do himself. If you are saved, it will be through faith on the Son of God who gave himself for you, and not alone for you, but for both you and your sin. You cannot free yourself from one single sin, not even the stain of a sin. It requires the blood of Christ, and His blood has been given for that very purpose, that He might 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Titus 2:14. He accepts sinners, and if they submit themselves to him, he will cleanse them from all their sins, keep them from sinning, energize them by His Spirit, and then work in them the works of God. Christ will work in man, as God worked in Christ when He was upon the earth.

Christ totally denied any power exhibited in His life as being of Himself; and He is our example. He said: 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' 'I have not spoken of Myself.' And again, 'The Father that dwelleth in me, He (the Father) doeth the works.' John 5:30; 12:49; 14:10. These statements are from the lips of the Saviour. Do you believe them? Do you think it possible for the servant to do what the Master did not, and that which He could not? Individually, let us accept the truth that man can do nothing, and let us believe that God will work in us that which pleases Him, even as He wrought in Christ. Then shall the works of God appear; self will die-- be crucified daily—and Christ will live within us, as he did in Paul, the hope of glory.

Mark this, there is work, yea, much work to be done, and God's way is for us to submit ourselves to Him, that He may work through us. Look at the mighty apostle Paul, for he worked in labours more abundant than all, and yet he was dead; but Christ was living in him, and by Christ were the works of Paul wrought. The only thing required of us is that we let God have His way and purpose in us. But with the evident truth that we can do nothing, and that God expects nothing of us,—the fallen mortal man,—let us not again be deceived in thinking that it is self that is trying to work when the impulse to do good is felt, and that therefore we must repress it, thinking to wait till Christ shall work in us with some irresistible power. From the point of surrender Christ stands ready to will and to work, and we should recognize both the desire to do, and the power to do, as coming from God, for He designs both to 'will' and 'work' in us effectually and mightily.

It may appear to others that we are doing, and we may deceive ourselves by thinking so, but it is not of ourselves, it is God working in us. It matters not what others may think; but if we deceive ourselves upon this point, we take credit and glory to self that belong to God, setting self in the place of God, attempting to do what God only can do, hence frustrating and defeating the purpose of God. Friends, brethren, sisters, one and all, let God work."

ELLEN WHITE STATEMENTS ON EFFORT

5T 371-372 "Our habits must be brought into conformity to the will of Cod. We are assured, "It is God which worketh in you," but man must do his part in controlling appetite and passion. The religious life requires the action of the mind and heart in harmony with the divine forces. No man can of himself work out his own salvation, and God cannot do this work for him without his cooperation. But when man works earnestly, God works with him, giving him power to become a son of God."

5T 345 "You may professedly believe every point of present truth, but unless you practice these truths it will avail you nothing."

MLT 99 "The child of God will not rest satisfied until he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ and sustained by His life-giving power. When he sees a weakness in his character, it is not enough to confess it again and again; he must go to work with determination and energy to overcome his defects by building up opposite traits of character. He will not shun this work because it is difficult. Untiring energy is required of the Christian; but he is not obliged to work in his own strength; divine power awaits his demand. Everyone who is sincerely striving for the victory over self will appropriate the promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee'. Through personal effort joined with the prayer of faith the soul is trained.... It may cost a severe conflict to overcome habits which have been long indulged, but we may triumph through the grace of Christ."

4T 654 "There are few who form evil habits deliberately. By frequent repetition of wrong acts, habits are formed unconsciously, and become so firmly established that the most persistent effort is required to effect a change. We should never be slow in breaking up a sinful habit. Unless evil habits are conquered, they will conquer us, and destroy our happiness,"

MLT 104 "God calls upon every young man and young woman to renounce every evil habit, to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Jesus will help you, so that you need not remain in indolence, making no effort to correct your wrongs and improve your conduct. The sincerity of your prayers will be proved by the vigor of the effort you make to obey all of God's commandments.... Do not excuse your defects of character, but in the grace of Christ overcome them, Wrestle with the evil passions which the Word of God condemns...."

6T 410 "'Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' Mark 14:38. Watch against the stealthy approach of the enemy, watch against old habits and natural inclinations, lest they assert themselves; force them back, and watch. Watch the thoughts, watch the plans, lest they become self-centered. Watch over the souls whom Christ has purchased with His own blood, Watch for opportunities to do them good."

I believe what Morris Venden presents is not true Seventh-day Adventism. It is a Seventh-day Adventist version of the popular Protestant belief of faith without works, but it is contrary to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. I believe that those who espouse these concepts will eventually be forced to come to the point of either giving up the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy and true Seventh-day Adventism, or of recognizing the error of these concepts, and reject them. **END OF MY RESPONSE TO THE USE OF THE WILL]**

NO RESPONSIBILITY

WE DO NOT HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OBEYING

"It is of the utmost importance to realize that Jesus is not placing the responsibility of our works or our fruit bearing, upon us. While it is true that we are to bear fruit, it is also true that it is accomplished by faith alone in Him." TKG, 110.

[MY RESPONSE]

[Responsibility is closely related to control. According to Venden, mankind (with the exception of Christ who was not like man) has had no control over his moral actions, even after surrendering to Christ, since the Garden of Eden when Adam first fell. We are totally helpless in our sins and must let Him miraculously remove the temptations and smooth the way so we will easily want to obey Him and "keep His commandments." All this must be without any personal conflict or "fight" or effort on our part. We are totally powerless to resist sin, any sin that comes our way. Because we have no moral control over ourselves, this side of the Second Advent, we therefore have no responsibility for our moral actions as long as we have accepted Christ as our Saviour and remain with Him. There is a final generation that obeys God fully, it will have to come as a by-product of Divinely controlled will automation. Read again that excellent study "The Error of Original Sin," written by Elder Ralph Larson, if you wish to better understand the philosophical basis underlying this deadly error.]END OF MY RESPONSE]

CRUCIFYING SELF-IT IS CRUCIFYING TO GIVE UP ON OBEYING HIM

"It is crucifying to admit that we cannot overcome sin, that we cannot obey, that we cannot produce righteousness, but that Jesus must do all of this for us." FTW, 172.

BEARING THE CROSS--GIVING UP, NOT SIN BUT SELF

"Jesus said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny ' What? 'himself.' Sometimes we read other things in there. Let him deny this or that or the other habit or practice or thing. I used to think that the cross was making myself not do something I really liked to do. I've heard other people say it too. 'My cross is giving up my dancing. I can't dance anymore. I sure wish I could, but that's my cross.' That is not what Jesus is talking about. No, the cross is to deny self. Let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. The cross is not refusing to do something we would like to do. It's denying ourselves." FTW, 85.

PEOPLE THAT DON'T WANT TO BEAR THE CROSS

"When we discover that we can do nothing but fall at Jesus' feet in humility and admit that we can't produce anything, then it becomes too heavy a cross to bear. But the cross is the essence of surrender, what it is all about. It involves giving up totally on self." OpF, 41;

[Venden's "cross-bearing" means being willing to stop trying to do right]

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHRISTIAN LIFE SUMMED UP IN RELATIONSHIP ONLY

"When we seek Jesus we learn to trust Him, this allows Him to do the work in battling the enemy that so many of us have tried with ill success. And if we will fight the fight of faith, He has promised that He will fight the fight of sin. For a long time some of us became so involved in the fight of sin we had no time or energy left for the fight of faith. Have you ever been in that trap? One of the reasons that the Christian life is so deplorably hard is because we get involved in the wrong fight, the wrong battle, and we fight the battle where the battle isn't instead of where it is. The Christian life, and salvation, is summed up in relationship only, if relationship is properly defined and understood." FTW, 84.

CHAPTER EIGHT- PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY DO NOT HELP OVERCOME SIN

DEVOTIONAL LIFE

HOW WE ARE SAVED

"We are not saved by our devotional life. We are saved by our acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for us at the cross and by continuing to accept Him on a daily basis." TKG, 53.

BIBLE STUDY

BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER

"It is possible to make this another work's trip. It is possible! Just because you read your Bible and pray every day doesn't mean your going to have a healthy spiritual life, but you're not going to if you don't!" 1 AUC CM.

BIBLE PROMISES

PROMISES-ONLY THAT HE WILL DO IT

"Promises, promises. The Bible is full of promises, assuring us that God will fight our battles and win for us. But our actions often say that He isn't big enough to keep His promises. I've got to do something myself. I've got to count to 10. I've got to control my thoughts. And invariably my attention is focused back on self." MCR, 127.

PRAYER- BIBLE PROMISES-SONG-DOESN'T WORK

" Now, we've all heard of various remedies that are suggested to people for overcoming temptations. Have you ever tried any of these? I've tried all of them, but they haven't worked. I don't believe that praying when temptations come is going to give me victory. I've tried it and it doesn't work. I don't believe that quoting verses of Scripture when temptations come is going to give me victory over temptation. I've tried that, too, and it doesn't work. I don't believe that singing hymns is effective, either, because I've tried all 16 stanzas! And usually when people try these methods, they become frustrated and discouraged, because failure and defeat still come. The problem is that they are fighting the battle where the battle isn't." MCR, 158, 159.

[MY RESPONSE]

[Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christ like temper, for wisdom

and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive."
{AA 564.1} END MY RESPONSE}

QUOTING SCRIPTURE

NO OVERCOMING POWER IN SCRIPTURE

"The quoting of Scripture came as a spontaneous response to the crisis of the moment [in the life of Christ]. He didn't depend upon mouthing some magical phrases for victory. A person may pray when he is tempted, if he is in touch with the Father, and he may quote Scripture, and he may sing, but that's not what gives him the power to overcome." SBF, 107.

PRAYER

PRAYER NOT EFFECTIVE.

"Now, I don't believe that praying when temptations come will give me victory over them. I've tried it, and it doesn't work. Nor will verses of Scripture or singing hymns. But someone always suggests such methods, and some people try them, only to find that failure and defeat still plague them." SBF-102.

PRAYING FOR ANSWERS WE OFTEN LIVE WORSE WHEN WE PRAY

"Sometimes I've heard Christians say, 'What's wrong with my Christian experience? When I've tried to spend time each day getting acquainted with Jesus, then the rest of the day has been horrible! I've found myself with more problems, committing more sin, than I ever did before I became a Christian. Why doesn't it really work for me? Wasn't I really converted?'"

"While it sounds sacrilegious to say that we often live worse when we pray than when we don't pray, many have discovered this experience to be a reality in their own lives. The enigma of experiencing worse lives in terms of performance and behavior when a person prays, has caused many to cease continuing to seek the deeper life with Christ. [Story of Job]

"The problem is that we're crippling hooked on this tendency to measure our Christian experience and salvation by our performance. And even after we begin to seek the deeper life of relationship, we are still addicted to the habit of measuring our success according to our behavior." MCR,137, 142.

[MY RESPONSE]

[Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." {AA 564.1}]

It was in sleeping when Jesus bade him watch and pray that Peter had prepared the way for his great sin. [Venden says praying does no good in overcoming sin] All the disciples, by sleeping in that critical hour, sustained a great loss. Christ knew the fiery ordeal through which they were to pass. He knew how Satan would work to paralyze their senses that they might be unready for the trial. Therefore it was that He gave them warning. **Had those hours in the garden been spent in watching and prayer, Peter would not have been left to depend upon his own feeble strength. He would not have denied his Lord.** Had the disciples watched with Christ in His agony, they would have been prepared to behold His suffering upon the cross. They would have understood in some degree the nature of His overpowering anguish. They would have been able to recall His words that foretold His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection. Amid the gloom of the most trying hour, some rays of hope would have lighted up the darkness and sustained their faith. {DA 713.4}

The experience of the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane **contains a lesson for the Lord's people today.** Taking with Him Peter and James and John, **Christ went to Gethsemane to pray.** He said to them: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? **Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.**" Mark 14:34-38. {8T 100.2}

Read these words carefully. Many today are asleep, as were the disciples. They are not watching and praying lest they enter into temptation. Let us read and study those portions of God's word that have special reference to these last days, pointing out the dangers that will threaten God's people. {8T 100.3}

Ministers who are truly Christ's representatives will be men of prayer. With an earnestness and a faith that will not be denied, they will plead with God that they may be strengthened and fortified for duty and trial, and that their lips may be sanctified by a touch of the living coal from off the altar, to speak the words of God to the people. {GW92 30.1}

We must have a converted ministry.--The efficiency and power attending a truly converted minister would make the hypocrites in Zion tremble and sinners afraid. The standard of truth and holiness is trailing in the dust. If those who sound the solemn notes of warning for this time could realize their accountability to God, **they would see the necessity for fervent prayer.** (PaM 19-Pastoral ministry) END MY RESPONSE]

ANGRY WITH GOD-BECAUSE WE WANT SOMETHING

"Have you ever been afraid to admit to God that you were angry with Him? Or that you didn't understand His dealings with you? Or that you weren't at all sure that He was going to do for you that which you were asking Him to do? There's a big difference between having faith that God is going to answer your prayers according to your understanding, and believing in God." FTW, 122.

WRONG WAY TO EXERCISE FAITH

"Have you ever thought that the way to exercise faith was to ask God for hard answers? Have you ever thought that the way to exercise faith was to make yourself claim promises, whether you really believed them or not? Have you ever heard that exercising faith is getting yourself into a tight spot and then waiting for God to bail you out? Not so. According to Scriptures, the exercise of faith has to do with getting often in contact with the Word of God. That's the way you exercise faith." FTW, 133.

BELIEVING CHRIST'S WORDS

DISBELIEVING CHRIST

"[Matthew 15:21 quoted. The woman whose daughter had a devil.] Jesus answered her not a word; He ignored her. 'I'm not here to help you.' She fell at His feet and worshiped Him. 'You can't give the bread to the dogs; give it to me. Give me dog food! Crumbs: And Jesus said, "Great is thy faith, your daughter is whole. What is faith? Take God at His Word! Did she? If she had taken Him at His word, she would have left. Believe! Did she believe what He said? Just the opposite. So faith is NOT taking God at His word or believing! Greek experts say the meaning of faith is TRUST. Faith, believe, trust have the same root word. Trust in God, trust also in Me. This is the victory that overcomes the world, our TRUST. Devils believe, but don't trust. Trust is the best word for faith." 2 AUC CM.

[His point here is that we should trust our lives to Him to work out in His own way, and not ask Him for or believe that He will give us various requested details during that life.]

CLAIMING PROMISES-FINDING A PROMISE AND BELIEVING IT

"Genuine faith as opposed to counterfeit faith is very small, but it is our only hope, because it is through faith we accept and depend upon Jesus. Now, let's take a look at the usual kind of faith. I had a man come into my office. He threw his Bible down. 'You can have it! Keep your faith and your Bible!' He said. He was a Seventh-day Adventist. What's the matter? His wife had died. I told her she wouldn't die. I claimed the promise. She died. It doesn't work [claiming promises]. I told him that that was not faith. That was the popular kind of faith. Find a promise [in the Bible], believe it strongly, and it will happen. If our faith is something we have to work on or work up, then who is responsible if it doesn't happen? It is neither possible if I am operating on a false basis of faith that the devil himself can answer my prayer or get me off the track. The devil can perform miracles!" U-2 AUCCM.

CHAPTER NINE- EVEN WORSE DANGERS TO AVOID IN OVERCOMING

RIGHTEOUSNESS AS AN ESCAPE

WHAT WE HAVE TO SURRENDER

"We have to surrender the idea that we can attain righteousness apart from Jesus! The devil likes to have us work on our righteousness as a substitute for knowing Jesus. And it is possible for some to give up their evil tempers as an escape from giving up themselves to God! This is a dead-end street, because the strong who are able to do right externally become proud, while the weak who are only able to fail miserably become discouraged." MCR, 125.

LEGALISTS

THE END OF WORKING

"There is bad news for legalists in this passage [Romans 10:4: "Christ is the end [Greek: "purposeu or "objective: "termination"] of the law of righteousness" because they will never attain to righteousness by working on it, no matter how hard they work. But there is also good news for legalists, because they don't have to keep wearing themselves out with fruitless effort. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone that believeth. And that's good news, especially for legalists!"

"It's the legalist who has been working the hardest on trying to gain salvation. And the words of Christ's friendly invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11: 28), can be the best news the legalist has ever heard when their meaning finally comes clear. It is good news to hear and accept that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." GN, 55, 56.

THE BLACK AND THE RED LEGALISTS

"This can get a little tricky, because there are two different kinds of legalists. There are the black legalists and the scarlet legalists. We might call them the rigid legalists and the liberal legalists. By the black legalist, I mean the one who has the black suit, black tie, black shoes, black socks, and a long face! He finds his security in the standards of the church that he upholds, and he judges everyone else who falls short of his achievements. (From his viewpoint, practically everyone else does fall short, by the way!) He's the Pharisee, and his outward performance is well controlled."

"The scarlet legalist is described in Revelation, the woman who is clothed in scarlet and adorned with jewels, etc. This type of legalist is reacting against the old guard form of legalism. This person wears jewelry and makeup, goes to the movies, is not particular in regard to Sabbath observance, and takes real pride in the fact that she is no longer legalistic. But both kinds of legalists are deceived. They are as legalistic as ever, but just afflicted with different forms of the disease." GN,54.

DEFEAT

DEFEATED BECAUSE WE DIDN'T LET GOD DO IT

"The reason we have met with defeat in our 'duty and deliberate obedience' approach is because we don't believe God will do it for us. Sure, it is an effectual blow to our pride, but God's plan of salvation has no room for man's pride." SBF,67.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

RULES, REGULATIONS AND LAWS

"Then where should I be placing my will and my willpower? Toward working on the rules, regulations, and laws for salvation? Toward the fight of sin? No." SBF, 74.

DANGER IN DIVIDING TIME

"Dividing my time between the fight of sin and the fight of faith is not God's plan for me. It must be all of my effort directed toward the fight of faith. That's where the battle really is." SBF, 76.

CHILD TRAINING

DANGER OF TEACHING CHILDREN GOOD HABITS

"Then someone else inquires, 'Doesn't God ever use righteousness by works to lead to righteousness by faith?' Has He ever done it? Do you think He does now? Somehow we've read quotes from Ellen G. White out of context and come up with the idea that parents should teach their children righteousness by habit, which will keep them out of jail long enough to enable them to find Christ when they're older. Haven't you heard the concept or variations of it? We've been eminently successful on this."

"Let's face it, Laodicea has done a bang-up job here. And what have been the results? Are the young people able to understand righteousness through Jesus, faith, and surrender? No. It hasn't opened the door any wider for faith and experience with Christ. Often they can't even see Christ at all. Tired of being moral only externally, they leave the church." SBF, 60,61.

[It seems unbelievable that such concepts can be printed in books published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. How can it be possible that our publishing houses will print such erroneous sentiments? Our homes, schools and Sabbath schools are trying to instill godly sentiments in the minds of our young and Venden declares it very dangerous to do such a thing! What have we come to when Adventist college pastors will preach such garbage and our publishing houses will print it! Is there no one to stand up and put a stop to these atheistic sentiments?]

THE MORALITY MOLD HURTS OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

"I have talked with young people completely incapable of fathoming what salvation through faith in Christ alone really means, because they are so steeped and brainwashed into their mold of morality and external goodness. Righteousness by faith sounds like some strange language to them. And as a result they apparently cannot understand the real relationship with God until they are almost in college, and often not even then. It's too bad." SBF, 61.

[It is well known that these books authored by Morris Venden are based on the sermons he gives in the pulpit to college students (he has been senior college pastor for a number of years now) or at camp meetings and weeks of prayer across the country. What you are reading is what he is teaching our youth all over North America. There was a time when Adventism tended to emphasize morality and standards (doctrine) more than Christ, now Venden in reaction wants to exalt the "righteousness of Christ" and leave out the morality and standards, or, lacking that, to ridicule them to death.]

FASTING

FOOLISH TO FAST

"Jesus said, 'This kind doesn't come out except by prayer and fasting.' But Jesus, who cast the demon out, hadn't been fasting, so far as we know. It's easy to take a literal interpretation of this and think that somehow God in heaven will look down and say, 'If these people will go without eating for a period of time and beg Me to help them, I will be impressed and will move in their behalf.' No, not at all. This doesn't line up with what Jesus said about God being willing to give good gifts to His children. You don't earn power over the demons by going without eating, by doing penance, by effort, or by struggling. So what did Jesus mean? The prayer and fasting that Jesus had been involved in included a continuing relationship with His Father." DD, 10-11.

[MY RESPONSE]

[His teachings make of none effect the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

You who labor in the cause of God and see no souls brought to the knowledge of the truth, no churches raised up and organized, should change your manner of labor. You should fast and pray. You should lay the matter before your brethren, and solicit their counsel and prayers, lest you be self-deceived, and, what is more, deceive others also. {GW92 265.3}

I then saw Brother Edson that he must gird on the whole armor and stand in readiness to go, for a journey was before him, and that souls needed help and that Jesus' work was almost finished in the sanctuary, and that we must work while the day lasts, and when Satan comes up with his power to oppress us we must have faith in God and beat him back, and if we could not get the victory we should fast and pray and we should surely get the victory and triumph over Satan. {6MR 250.4}

Many who profess godliness do not inquire into the reason of Christ's long period of fasting and suffering in the wilderness. His anguish was not so much from enduring the pangs of hunger as from his sense of the fearful result of the indulgence of appetite and passion upon the race. He knew that appetite would be man's idol, and would lead him to forget God, and would stand directly in the way of his salvation. {RH, September 1, 1874 par. 3}

The Lord will not remove from his people every occasion to doubt; but he will give sufficient light and evidence to encourage faith and confidence; and if they walk as Christ, the light of the world, leads the way, they will not step aside into the paths of doubt and unbelief. When declension and danger threaten the church, there will be more praying, more fasting, by the faithful few, and the Lord will answer the prayers offered to him in sincerity, and at the same time he will come forth as an avenger because of the guiltiness of the evil-workers. He will be a protector; for he will "avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them." {RH, December 11, 1888 par. 3}

It is the desire of my heart that you shall know the power of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have an all-sufficient Helper. He understands our weakness and our needs. Let there be fasting and prayer. Let self be humbled. Let the heart be cleansed from all impurity. Confess your sins, and plead with God day and night for the victory, and you will walk in the light as Christ is in the light.

Ellen G. White.

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{RH, March 23, 1905 par. 14} END MY RESPONSE]

WASTING TIME

WASTING TIME TRYING TO SIN NOT

"We have been wasting time and energy trying to sin not, when the time and effort and energy is supposed to go toward abiding in Him. Do you follow at all?" ROE, 105.

FANATICISM

WHAT IS A FANATIC?

"I've heard several definitions of a fanatic. Someone who has lost his purpose but doubled his efforts." 2 AUC CM.

WEARINESS

TOO TIRING

"Best thing to do is to spend time on eating, not growing. Put the attention on faith. Obedience is the fruit of faith. The devil has tried to get us to work on trying to be good instead of trying to know Jesus, and in the process of trying to be good, some of us have gotten so tired. So tired that we hardly had enough strength left to get to know Jesus." 3 AUC CM.

WEARING OUT OUR LIVES

"Sometimes we think there are many things we have to do in living the Christian life, and we wear out our lives trying to accomplish them." SBF, 67.

THE FEW VALUES IN NOT SINNING

THERE ARE BENEFITS: NO JAIL OR EARTHLY GUILT

"Now someone is sure to ask if it is wrong to be 'good' if he doesn't really feel like it. Many young people have raised the question. 'Theoretically we understand the concept of salvation and relationship through faith in Christ,' they explain. 'But if we've been forcing ourselves to do what's right, then for the sake of salvation through faith in Christ alone, hadn't we better stop being good so that "grace may abound" in our lives? What are we supposed to do while our faith is growing to the ideal point of constant natural obedience? If we try hard to keep obeying deliberately, will that ruin everything? Or if we feel like committing fornication or adultery, would it be just as well to go ahead, then?"

"Although being good by not being externally bad is not being good as far as God is concerned, there's no question that man considers it as good. If I feel like killing someone, but manage to restrain myself from doing it, I will have some real benefits. I'll keep out of jail, and I won't have the guilt of a murder on my hands. (But I'll probably give myself credit for having enough willpower to control my actions.) Certainly morality has all kinds of advantages as far as man and the law view it. But external goodness contains no real righteousness as far as God is concerned. In fact, it can even make one feel secure apart from God." SBF, 50.

OBEDIENCE ONLY IMPRESSES HUMAN LAW COURTS

"The fight of sin is not where the battle really is regardless of whether I've been seemingly 'successful' or not, because the only way I can ever succeed in it is externally, outwardly, and that means nothing in God's book. Of course it impresses the courts of the land, it works with the traffic signals and police on the highways, and it keeps me out of jail, but it does not count for Christianity or for salvation." SBF, 73.

CHAPTER TEN- SOME ADVENTIST DOCTRINES ARE WRONG

NOT WHAT YOU BELIEVE (Doctrinal Content)

NOT WHAT YOU BELIEVE

"In the first place, belief is not based on what, it is based on whom. It isn't what set of doctrines or creeds you consider to be correct. I know in whom I have believed, not in what I have believed." FTW, 138.

[Morrie's problem very often is pitting one truth against another. We are saved by what we believe and "in whom" (Christ) we believe; not one vs. the other.]

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY WRITINGS

A BASIC PROBLEM

"Because of the evidence that Jesus' coming is right upon us, people are getting panicky. One of our biggest temptations is to adjust our theology to match our experience, instead of finding out how to change our experience to match our theology. And in spite of our attempts to hide our real concern, we would have to admit that it isn't so much what Ellen White said about the geological formation of volcanoes, for instance, that we're having trouble with. The problem is what she said about sin and righteousness. I don't think that people are so worried about whether she borrowed

material from Hanna or Edersheim or Uriah Smith. I think they are worried about what she had to say concerning sin and righteousness." GN, 21.

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY STUDY-READING IN THE "TESTIMONIES" FOR STUDY TIME

"In all our devotional experience, the need is to study for the purpose of communication or fellowship with Jesus. Time alone at the beginning of every day to seek Jesus is the goal.

"If I am seeking fellowship with Jesus, am I going to spend more time studying the four Gospels or some point of history or prophecy? If I'm seeking fellowship with Jesus, would I choose a volume of rebuke and reproof or 'The Desire of Ages'? Let's make a distinction here. There are many people who have turned away from Ellen G. White and her writings because someone has majored in what we might call the instructional writings. There are entire books that are primarily for the purpose of instruction, counsel, reproof."

"There are other books that we might call inspirational writings. This doesn't mean that you can't find some instructions in the inspirational, and some inspiration in the instructional. But there are these two general types of writings."

"A person who studies only in the instructional often becomes the type of person who goes around with a special testimony for his neighbor across the aisle. He has a reproof and rebuke for every occasion." FTW, 113.

[MY RESPONSE]

[5T 67--You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision--the precious rays of light shining from the throne.

4T 230--God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.

3SM 68--Many times in my experience I have been called upon to meet the attitude of a certain class, who acknowledged that the testimonies were from God, but took the position that this matter and that matter were Sister White's opinion and judgment. This suits those who do not love reproof and correction, and who, if their ideas are crossed, have occasion to explain the difference between the human and the divine.

If the preconceived opinions or particular ideas of some are crossed in being reproved by testimonies, they have a burden at once to make plain their position to discriminate between the testimonies, defining what is Sister White's human judgment, and what is the word of the Lord. Everything that sustains their cherished ideas is divine, and the testimonies to correct their errors are human--Sister White's opinions. They make of none effect the counsel of God by their tradition.-- Manuscript 16, 1889.

5T 691--Do not by your criticisms take out all the force, all the point and power, from the Testimonies. Do not feel that you can dissect them to suit your own ideas, claiming that God has given you ability to discern what is light from heaven and what is the expression of mere human wisdom. If the Testimonies speak not according to the word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united.

ISM 42,43-- It does not become anyone to drop a word of doubt here and there that shall work like poison in other minds, shaking their confidence in the messages which God has given, which have aided in laying the foundation of this work, and have attended it to the present day, in reproofs, warnings, corrections, and encouragements. To all who have stood in the way of the Testimonies, I would say, God has given a message to His people, and His voice will be heard, whether you hear or forbear. Your opposition has not injured me; but you must give an account to the God of heaven, who has sent these warnings and instructions to keep His

people in the right way. You will have to answer to Him for your blindness, for being a stumbling block in the way of sinners.

Here is a great website if you have any doubts about the Spirit of Prophecy and it's authority:

<http://dedication.www3.50megs.com/Home.html>

END OF MY RESPONSE]

STANDARDS - DEALING WITH SPECIFIC SINS

DEVIL HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH ROCK MUSIC?

"Perhaps some speaker tells our young people that the devil has something to do with rock music, and they get rid of their rock records. But those who have given up their rock music for any reason other than a love for Jesus, and letting Jesus come into their lives, have not really given up their rock music." FTW, 169

IF YOU GIVE UP ROCK MUSIC

"Whenever someone tries to eject sin by his own backbone and will power, he's going to end up in a worse condition than when he started. A teenager who has given up rock music may not go back to it, but he may take up something else. Or he may succumb to pride because of his accomplishment, and pride is the worst sin of all." -00 F, 36, 37.

JESUS HAS TO DO IT ALL

"When it comes to my attempts to overcome smoking or temper, He has to do it all." 00 F, 42.

DRINKING AND SMOKING AND WITH JESUS

"The weakest person, who can't stop his drinking or smoking or anything else, who also fears that he cannot enter into a meaningful private life with God, has hope too, because God will meet him more than halfway. When it comes to overcoming sins, God doesn't meet me more than halfway, He has to do it all." FTW, 173.

THE ELIJAH MESSAGE

SELF-WORSHIP

"The first part [of the Elijah Message] 'Ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord. The second part 'Thou has followed Baalim.' And the third part, a call for decision, 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' . So the second part of Elijah's message is a warning against self-worship, a warning against trying to save ourselves by our own efforts. Therefore Baal worship is one of our greatest dangers. All you have to do to worship Baal is to try in some way, to save yourself, instead of relying upon the Lamb of God." RET, 16, 17,38.

THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE

THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE

"The second part is "Give glory to Him." There is no room for the glory of man in the work of the gospel. The human problem is the tendency to center on the glory, the achievements, the ability of man. In the Christian setting, even if we get it straight that we're not going to be able to add anything at all to the work of the cross, we still hang on like bulldogs to the idea that we can do something to help God out in the work He wants to do in us. But whether it's in what God has done for us [at Calvary], or whether it's in what God wants to do in us [now], there is no glory for man in the work of the gospel, because all we can do is come to Jesus and keep coming to Him, just as we are." RET, 51.

THE SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE

SPIRITUAL FORNICATION

"Right at the end of the second angel's message is something else we need to consider. It says that Babylon 'made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' What is her 'fornication'? In a spiritual sense this would be the merging of two principles that are not mergeable. The two principles that cannot merge are salvation by faith and salvation by works. Theologians have a word for the attempt to merge two incompatible, antagonistic principles. Syncretism. Babylon is syncretism or spiritual fornication. For since salvation by faith and salvation by works are totally incompatible, they cannot be combined. They are mutually exclusive. Salvation is either totally through faith in Christ alone or totally through your own works. There is no middle ground. To attempt combining the two is to attempt the impossible." ROE, 64.

OUT OF BABYLON

"Thank God He has power to free us from the captivity of Babylon and everything it involves and to bring us to our knees with Nebuchadnezzar in praise and honor of Him away from the worship of ourselves, away from glorifying ourselves, away from trying to save ourselves in any way, to worship Him, the Creator, the King of heaven." ROE, 68.

THE SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE

" 'I want to do it myself!' We find it not only in children but in older people as well and it is found right in the middle of these three angels' messages. It is the very essence of all false religion, 'Do it myself, God, I'll do it myself.' " ROC, 60.

THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE

REST FROM LABOR

" 'No rest for the wicked' is a common phrase. But sometimes there has been no rest for the 'righteous' either, and that's one of the things we would like to notice particularly as we study the third angel's message. Finally, we are told that the ones who die in the Lord rest from their labors, and their works follow them. Jesus invites you today to rest from your labors, to be crucified with Christ, to be dead to self and self-worship. One of the things that happens at the very end with Elijah people is that we come to understand that we are invited to Jesus to find rest, not only in terms of our hope of heaven, but also in terms of obedience and our living now." ROE, 69, 80, 81.

THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE

"The last warning message of Elijah the Third includes both the work of God for us and the work of God in us. These works of God take place only by faith, by the acceptance of His pardon and power. And this is what constitutes the third angel's message." ROE, 71.

THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS

THE SAINTS ARE PATIENT WITH THEIR BEHAVIOR

" Interestingly, the book of Revelation describes the commandment keeping saints as patient. If you are going to be one of those who have the faith of Jesus, enduring to the end and keeping God's commandments, you will have patience as well. Have you ever found yourself impatient with your behavior and performance? It's an easy thing to do. And yet surely we can afford to be as patient with ourselves as God is with us." OOF, 18.

THE BEAST

THE BEAST OF REVELATION-SELF-WORSHIP

"The beast represents a form of self-worship. And if there's anything worse than one person worshipping himself, it's two people worshipping themselves. And if there's anything worse than that, it's two million people worshipping themselves. And if there's anything worse than that, it's organized self-worship. So if you are familiar with this beast in the historical or prophetic sense at all, you know that it is a system of organized self-worship on the part of millions, a system of works as a basis of salvation. And self-worship is called blasphemy in the Bible."

"But do you have to become a part of this giant, worldwide, organized system of self-worship in order to worship yourself? Would it be possible to be a member of the 'remnant church' and still be worshipping yourself? It might be wise to stop focusing on people 'out there' whom we consider to be worshipping' themselves and begin looking closer to home." ROE, 72.

THE MARK AND THE SEAL

THE MARK OF THE BEAST AND THE SEAL OF GOD

"The mark of the beast is more than simply which day you go to church. Do you accept that? In fact, the seal of God, which you understand to be the opposite of the mark of the beast, involves more than just keeping Saturday. So the mark of the beast involves something more than just going to church on Sunday. These days can become symbols of works or faith. The first day of the week represents salvation by works." ROE,73.

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST-JANUARY 1 RESOLUTIONS EXAMPLE

"So the image to the beast is enforcing a religious duty by human power. Will you personalize that, please? Have you ever tried to enforce a religious duty by human power in your life? Have you ever tried to enforce a religious duty by human power on January 1, righteousness by resolution. Human nature has long come up with psychological and humanistic gimmicks to try and force itself to obey. The combination of belief in God, in a theoretical sense, and trying to obey through your own efforts, is the image to the beast. But God's power plus man's power equals NO power." ROE, 77. [Emphasis his.].

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY- TO BECOME A SLAVE TO THE IDEA THAT I CAN SAVE MYSELF

"The only thing necessary to become a captive of Babylon is to become a slave to the idea that I can save myself or that I can 'do it myself,' in terms of living the Christian life or of getting to heaven. The person who is going through life trying to become good enough and stay good enough to 'make it' through the gates of the Holy City is a captive to Babylon. The religious person who does not take time for a meaningful devotional life has partaken of the essence of Babylon. He is trying to save himself. That's what Babylon is all about. Although its origin was at Babel, it has continued through the centuries to this very day. And it is possible, even at the very end of earth's history, to be a captive to Babylon." ROE, 61, 62.

[MY RESPONSE TO THE ABOVE]

[The three angels messages, the mark of the beast, the seal of God, etc. I have put just a few statements but there are hundreds.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Isaiah 58:1. {CTr 350.1}

This is our work. The light that we have upon the third angel's message is the true light. The mark of the beast is exactly what it has been proclaimed to be. All in regard to this matter is not yet understood, and will not be understood until the unrolling of the scroll, but a most solemn work is to be accomplished in our world. The Lord's command to His servants is "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." {CTr 350.4}

There is to be no change in the features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more. If any stand in the way, to hinder the advancement of the work in the lines that God has appointed, they will displease God. No line of our faith that has made us what we are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty; we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world. {CTr 350.5}

What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world, are receiving the worldly mold, and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth,—these are receiving the heavenly mold, and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth, and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity. {CET 191.1}

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God,—candidates for heaven. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour. {CET 191.2}

The prophecy of Revelation 13 declares that the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns shall cause "the earth and them which dwell therein" to worship the papacy—there symbolized by the beast "like unto a leopard." The beast with two horns is also to say "to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast;" and, furthermore, it is to command all, "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive the mark of the beast. Revelation 13:11-16. It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns, and that this prophecy will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgment of her supremacy.

When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9-11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:3. That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love. {DD 37.1}

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. **The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.** {DD 37.2}

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to **look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will...** {DD 38.1}

The Search for Salvation

God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" the Saviour referred him to the Scriptures, saying: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God's law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles and claims. **It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.** {DD 38.2}

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the

Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {DD 38.3}

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Mark 12:24. The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. If men would but take the Bible as it reads, **if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds,** a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.... {DD 38.4} END MY RESPONSE]

MEANING OF THE SABBATH

REST FROM OVERCOMING-SYMBOLIZED BY SABBATH

"Of what is the Sabbath a sign? Sanctification. Exodus 31:13 talks about it. Ezekiel 20:12, 20 talks about it. The Sabbath is a sign of the God who sanctifies His people. The truth about God's day of rest and the truth about rest from our own efforts to overcome are closely connected." TKG, 100.

ENTER THE REST OF NO LONGER TRYING.

"But I invite you today to enter into God's rest, to cease from your own works in trying to obey and overcome and be victorious. If we will continue to seek personal fellowship with Him, God will lead us to the rest that is symbolized by the Sabbath rest. I will try to put all this in the simplest possible terms. If you enter into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and continue that relationship with Him from now until He comes again, He will do the rest. That's the simplest answer to the question of how to obey. Forgiveness is a gift, salvation is a gift, and obedience is a gift, all to be received through continuing fellowship and communion with the One who is the giver." TKG, 100-101. .

THIS EMPHASIS IS THE LAST MESSAGE TO MANKIND

"At the time of His coming there will be only two groups. This emphasis upon the righteousness of Christ by faith alone has been rising steadily, and nothing is stopping it. It's the last message just before Jesus returns, and it causes the last events just before He comes again. We can rejoice that we see it happening, for it tells us that Jesus' coming is very, very near." TKG, 124.

[MY RESPONSE]

[See Hebrews 4. "The rest here spoken of is the rest of grace" (EGW Supplementary Material on Heb. 4:9; cf. GC 253). It is "the true rest of faith" (MB 1).

We enter into God's "rest" when we "consider" Jesus (ch. 3:1) and listen to His voice (chs. 3:7, 15; 4:7), when we exercise faith in Him (ch. 4:2, 3), when we cease from our own efforts to earn salvation (v. 10), when we "hold fast our profession" (v. 14), and when we draw near to the throne of grace (v. 16). Those who would enter into this experience must beware of "an evil heart of unbelief" (ch. 3:12), of hardening their hearts (chs. 3:8, 15; 4:7). They must strive to enter into God's "rest" (ch. 4:11).

Those who enter into God's "rest" will "hold fast" their "profession" (v. 14). They will "come boldly unto the throne of grace" to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (v. 16).

"The importance of the Sabbath as the memorial of creation is that it keeps ever present the true reason why worship is due to God," because he is the Creator, and we his creatures. "The Sabbath therefore lies at the very foundation of divine worship; for it teaches this great truth in the most impressive manner, and no other institution does this.

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The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and his creatures. This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten." **It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that he is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial.** Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and

affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God, "him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." It follows that the message which commands men to worship God and keep his commandments, will especially call upon them to keep the fourth commandment. {GC88 437.2}

In contrast to those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, the third angel points to another class, against whose errors a solemn and fearful warning is uttered: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." [Revelation 14:9, 10.] A correct interpretation of the symbols employed is necessary to an understanding of this message. {GC88 438.1}

Why are so many so slow in recognizing the work they ought to do in seeking to save that which is lost. Consider prayerfully what is to be done. Kill indolence. Lay hold of personal labor. Too much labor is done by those who minister in word and doctrine in behalf of churches that should be set to work themselves. The church members should carry a weight of responsibility. They should keep their own souls in the love of God by exercising all the powers they have. By precept and example they should bear witness of the power of the truth and grace of Christ upon human hearts. This will commend the truth that the seventh-day Sabbath is a sign between them and their God. Obedience in the observance of the Sabbath testifies of the sanctification received through its observance. {19MR 173.1}

The Rest Obtained by Labor.-- [Hebrews 4:9, 11 quoted.] **The rest here spoken of is the rest of grace, obtained by following the prescription, Labor diligently. Those who learn of Jesus His meekness and lowliness find rest in the experience of practicing His lessons. It is not in indolence, in selfish ease and pleasure-seeking, that rest is obtained. Those who are unwilling to give the Lord faithful, earnest, loving service will not find spiritual rest in this life or in the life to come. Only from earnest labor comes peace and joy in the Holy Spirit--happiness on earth and glory hereafter.** {7BC 928.7}

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Hebrews 4:9. {SD 76.1}

If you are willing to learn meekness and lowliness of heart in Christ's school, He will surely give you rest and peace. It is a terribly hard struggle to give up your own will and your own way. But this lesson learned, you will find rest and peace. Pride, selfishness, and ambition, must be overcome; your will must be swallowed up in the will of Christ. The whole life may become one constant love sacrifice, every action a manifestation, and every word an utterance of love. As the life of the vine circulates through stem and cluster, descends into the lower fibres, and reaches to the topmost leaf, so will the grace and love of Christ burn and abound in the soul, sending its virtues to every part of the being, and pervading every exercise of body and mind. {SD 76.2}

In being co-workers with Christ in the great work for which He gave His life, we shall find true rest. When we were sinners, He gave His life for us. He wants us to come to Him and learn of Him. Thus we are to find rest. He says He will give us rest. "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." In doing this you will find in your own experience the rest that Christ gives, the rest that comes from wearing His yoke and lifting His burdens. {SD 76.3}

A form of godliness without the power is a weariness and burden; but when the whole heart is enlisted in the service of Christ, there is rest to the soul; for God causeth such to triumph daily over the powers of darkness. God helps him who commits his soul unto the Lord as unto a faithful Creator. {SD 76.4}

To learn the lessons Christ teaches is the greatest treasure students can find. Rest comes to them in the consciousness that they are trying to please the Lord. 77 {SD 76.5} END MY RESPONSE]

CHAPTER 11- PREPARING FOR HIS COMING-IS IT NECESSARY?

WHEN WE SIN-NO CONDEMNATION IN FALLING

"Satan has triumphed time and again by getting religious people to believe that when they fall or fail, they are condemned." FTW, 192.

HASTENING HIS RETURN-WE ARE TWISTING THE STATEMENT

"However there is another problem, we have twisted that statement COL 69 :1 [COL 69, paragraph 1] around to make it appear that somehow we are going to cause Christ's coming by getting His character perfectly reproduced in us. I don't think this is what He's waiting for at all. We have done the same thing with the gospel to all the world that if we get busy and finish the work, then He will be able to come." TTI-1, 8-9.

[MY RESPONSE]

[Venden is here commenting on the "Christ's Object Lessons," 69:1 statement, which was quoted earlier in this "Insight" interview (on page 7). Here is the COL statement that Venden is here discussing: "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." Read the entire page. Paragraph two is just as forthright in presenting this beautiful concept. Also notice in the above statement by Venden that taking the final message to all the world in order to hasten His coming is but another worthless idea that needs to be discarded even though Jesus Himself declared it to be so (Matthew 24:14¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.)]

Christ is saying, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" and He adds, "Go ye also into the vineyard." Matthew 20:6, 7. Why is it that many more do not respond to the call? Is it because they think themselves excused in that they do not stand in the pulpit? Let them understand that there is a large work to be done outside the pulpit by thousands of consecrated lay members. {AA 110.3}

Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability. When the members of the church of God do their appointed work in the needy fields at home and abroad, in fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world will soon be warned and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14. {AA 111.1} **END MY RESPONSE**

HOW THE FINAL ISSUE OF OBEDIENCE WILL BE MET

"If we consider obedience important, and if obedience or disobedience is the final question the whole world will decide, then I can do only one thing relative to that obedience, and that is to give up on myself. But only through faith and trust in the One who has the power to produce genuine righteousness will that happen." OOF, 27.

DON'T BE IMPATIENT TO OVERCOME

"Sometimes we get impatient and try to put timetables on Christian growth and victory and overcoming. But we'd better not! That's God's business; that's the Holy Spirit's work." TKG, 95.

SIN - AND JESUS TOO-JESUS STAYS WITH THOSE WITH CHERISHED SINS

"How Jesus Treated Known Sinners- Is it possible for saints to sin? Is it possible to sin and know that you are sinning, and keep doing what you are doing wrong, and still be a Christian? How does Jesus treat saints who sin? This is a practical question, and has an answer that is exciting and encouraging. He was kind to His disciples. He was patient with them. He didn't condemn them. He gave them His lessons and when they didn't learn, He continued teaching. And above all He continued fellowshiping with them. This sin, of which the disciples were guilty, was one of the worst sins, if not THE worst. It was sin, it was BAD sin. In fact, they continued in this sin the whole three years they were with Christ. They were still at it in the upper room on the night before the crucifixion. And so it qualifies as known sin, continuing sin, habitual sin, cherished sin, persistent sin, presumptuous sin, you name it. The disciples were guilty of the worst sin. At this point someone might say, 'The problem with these disciples was that they were not converted.' Don't tell me that!" TKG, 84, 86, 87,88. [Emphasis his.]

KNOWN SIN AND A CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP

"So it is possible for the growing Christian to discover that he has a known sin going on in his life and at the same time a continuing relationship with Jesus." TKG, 93.

CHERISHED SIN ONLY BECOMES DANGEROUS WHEN WE SCRAP THE RELATIONSHIP

"Now we have come to the real issue in cherished sin, presumptuous sin, highhanded sin, the kind of sin that gives dangerous ground. When we choose to scrap the relationship with Jesus or refuse the relationship with Jesus in favor of the sin, then we are in peril." TKG, 94.

[MY RESPONSE]

[When we knowingly sin we break the relationship with Jesus. Willful sin separates from God. It's impossible to have a saving relationship with Jesus when we knowingly are in rebellion against Him. The gospel has a cure for that problem and it's not continuing to sin and believe you are in a saving relationship.

There is nothing so offensive to God as sin. Instead of making void the law of God by continuing in sin, every truly converted soul will be walking in the path of humble obedience to all of God's commandments. They will search the Scriptures that they might know the truth. Who hath bewitched the impenitent, the transgressor, that sin is chosen rather than obedience? It is the power of Satan that came to Adam and Eve in Eden, the deceiving, bewitching power of the fallen angel. . . . {UL 209.5}

He condescended to this great sacrifice, not that sin in man should become a virtue, not that sin might be made righteousness. He took the steps that man is required to take in conversion. He went forward in baptism, and when He came up out of the water He kneeled down and offered up such a prayer to His Father as Heaven had never heard before. --Manuscript 25, July 14, 1887, "A Peculiar People."

The Lord is coming; the alarm must be sounded. The people who profess the truth are unready. Should their probation close now, they would be weighed in the balance, and found wanting. **Some have not made earnest efforts to overcome; they have not realized the danger of continuing in sin, and have become almost content where they are.** As I felt their peril, I longed to see them coming up out of the dark cellar of unbelief, into the upper room where there is light and happiness. I greatly regretted that we must close the meeting without seeing a deeper and more thorough work wrought in their hearts. {RH, November 13, 1883 par. 6}

There is no excuse for continuing in sin. No man is obliged to do evil, and be lost. Every one who perishes destroys his own soul. The provisions of grace are ample. Jesus is pleading in our behalf, and there is mercy for even the most guilty and sinful. Let us take hold of the strength of Jesus. He loves us with a love that is inexpressible; let us respond to that love. {ST, June 5, 1884 par. 12}

He has a kingdom prepared, not for disloyal subjects, but for His children whom He has tested and tried in a world marred and corrupted by sin. **As obedient children, we have the privilege of relationship with God.** "If children," He says, "then heirs" to an immortal inheritance. . . . Christ and His people are one (Letter 119, 1897). {6BC 1077.8}

God sent Christ into the world to redeem men from sin. Shall we not, then, accept the society of the only begotten Son of God? **The sinner is privileged to recognize Christ as his divine and adorable brother, but this relationship cannot be claimed while he continues to cherish sin.** {RH, January 26, 1897 par. 14}

Truth never brings the soul into bondage. It is turning from truth to error that brings the soul into captivity. The one who is bound up in close relationship with Christ is freed from the slavery of sin. {ST, August 22, 1900 par. 15}

It is sin, not trial and suffering, which separates God from His people and renders the soul incapable of enjoying and glorifying Him. It is sin that is destroying souls. Sin and vice exist in Sabbathkeeping families. {CG 440.3}

Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.
16 {CCh 51.4}

And Venden even makes this preposterous statement, I'll just relist the ending from the above statement, "And so it qualifies as known sin, continuing sin, habitual sin, cherished sin, persistent sin, presumptuous sin, you name it. The disciples were guilty of the worst sin. At this point someone might say, 'The problem with these disciples was that they were not converted.' Don't tell me that!" TKG, 84, 86, 87,88. [Emphasis his.]"

With blinding tears he makes his way to the solitudes of the garden of Gethsemane, and there prostrates himself where he saw his Saviour's prostrate form, when the bloody sweat was forced from his pores by his great agony. Peter remembers with remorse that he was asleep when Jesus prayed during those fearful hours. His proud heart breaks, and penitential tears moisten the sods so recently stained with the bloody sweat-drops of God's dear Son. **He left that garden a converted man. He was ready then to pity the tempted. He was humbled, and could sympathize with the weak and erring. He could caution and warn the presumptuous, and was fully fitted to strengthen his brethren.** —Vol. 3, p. 416. {GW92 401.1}

Jesus sorrowfully told His disciples that all of them would be offended because of Him that night. But Peter ardently affirmed that although all others should be offended because of Him, he would not be offended. Jesus said to Peter: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: **but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.**" Luke 22:31,32. {EW 166.1}

On the following day the apostles were brought before the council. The very men who had eagerly cried for the blood of the Just One were there. They had heard Peter deny his Lord with cursing and swearing when charged with being one of His disciples, and they hoped again to intimidate him. **But Peter had been converted, and he now saw an opportunity to remove the stain of that hasty, cowardly denial and to exalt the name which he had dishonored.** With holy boldness, and in the power of the Spirit, he fearlessly declared unto them, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." {EW 193.2}

Christ had washed the feet of Judas first. This disciple was having his last opportunity. When the ceremony was ended, the Master said, "Ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean." These words were spoken that Judas might understand that Christ had read his secret purposes, that he was not ignorant of his wicked schemes. **This was his opportunity to confess and be converted.** The disciples did not understand his words at the time, but they were imprinted on their memory afterward, and they had something to consider in the patience, the mercy, and the forbearance of God toward the most grievously erring. {RH, June 14, 1898 par. 6} **[So Judas wasn't converted when he was in the upper room]**

During these days that Christ spent with His disciples, they gained a new experience. As they heard their beloved Master explaining the Scriptures in the light of all that had happened, **their faith in Him was fully established.** They reached the place where they could say, "I know whom I have believed." 2 Timothy 1:12. {AA 27.1}

Under the training of Christ the disciples had been led to feel their need of the Spirit. **Under the Spirit's teaching they received the final qualification,** and went forth to their lifework. **No longer were they ignorant**

and uncultured. No longer were they a collection of independent units or discordant, conflicting elements. No longer were their hopes set on worldly greatness. They were of "one accord," "of one heart and of one soul." Acts 2:46; 4:32. Christ filled their thoughts; the advancement of His kingdom was their aim. In mind and character they had become like their Master, and men "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13. {AA 45.2}

Pentecost brought them the heavenly illumination. **The truths they could not understand while Christ was with them were now unfolded. With a faith and assurance that they had never before known, they accepted the teachings of the Sacred Word.** No longer was it a matter of faith with them that Christ was the Son of God. They knew that, although clothed with humanity, He was indeed the Messiah, and they told their experience to the world with a confidence which carried with it the conviction that God was with them. {AA 45.3}

Christ had bidden the first disciples love one another as He had loved them. Thus they were to bear testimony to the world that Christ was formed within, the hope of glory. "A new commandment I give unto you," He had said, "That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13:34. **At the time when these words were spoken, the disciples could not understand them; but after they had witnessed the sufferings of Christ, after His crucifixion and resurrection, and ascension to heaven, and after the Holy Spirit had rested on them at Pentecost, they had a clearer conception of the love of God and of the nature of that love which they must have for one another.** Then John could say to his fellow disciples: {AA 547.1} "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." {AA 547.2} END MY RESPONSE]

PERFECTION

DANGEROUS TO TALK MUCH ABOUT IT

"Perfection can be a dangerous subject. Dwelling on the topic can itself be a discouraging and defeating work. The reason is that when we talk about perfection, our attention is almost invariably focused inward on ourselves, and that's not where the power is. The power is always outside of us. So, to deal safely with the question of perfection, it must be handled lightly, once over, and be done with it." JSAP, 8.

DON'T STUDY PERFECTIONISM

"There is a vast difference between the legitimate study of the subject of perfection and becoming involved in perfectionism. A person who is into perfectionism is one who becomes preoccupied with perfection. He thinks of little else. He focuses his attention primarily on the subject of perfection, and everybody else's as well." FTW, 362.

WRONG: SINLESS BEFORE SECOND COMING

"To begin with, we need a clear understanding of the difference between perfection and perfectionism. Here is where we need a glossary. I will hazard a definition: The person who is involved in perfectionism is the one who usually thinks of little else, the one who focuses his attention and everybody else's attention primarily on perfection. The one who believes in perfectionism is often the one who insists that the sinful nature is eradicated before Jesus comes again and that we can not only overcome but become sinless as well. I would like to disclaim any identity with perfectionism. But the doctrine of perfection is a good Bible doctrine, a solid Bible teaching, and Jesus Himself had something to say about it." JSAP, 8.

[MY RESPONSE]

[It is quite obvious from this passage that Venden has different theological definitions than we read in the Spirit of Prophecy. He is fully in favor of "perfection" and "perfection of character" and "victory over sin" and "a full overcoming." But we read farther and we find that he does not believe in any of these concepts in the sense that they are defined in the spirit of Prophecy. Venden says that "perfectionism" includes the beliefs that we can overcome sin to the point of becoming sinless, and that it will take place before the Second Advent of Jesus. And he says that he does not believe in these ideas.]

God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. **He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. Moral perfection is required of all. Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing.** We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes. {COL 330.2}

[AND WHAT IS MORAL PERFECTION, READ THE NEXT STATEMENT]

When, through faith in Jesus Christ, man does according to the very best of his ability, and seeks to keep the way of the Lord by obedience to the Ten Commandments, the perfection of Christ is imputed to cover the transgression of the repentant and obedient soul. {FLB 85.6}

"The very image of God is to be re-produced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671).

"Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the Word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself" (*ibid.* , p. 671).

"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. . . . Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with . . . the fullness of divine power. . . . It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. *Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church*" (*ibid.*; italics supplied).

Perfection is a vital doctrine. But it must be perceived in light of a distinction between the fallen nature Christ took upon His pure, divine nature and the carnal nature every human cultivates from infancy, a nature that Christ, our atonement, never assumed!

The complete union with God that Christ restored at His incarnation is the goal of the final atonement. But because of a carnal nature, our obedience at every step must be purified by the merits of Christ's perfect obedience and sacrifice. To this end atonement falls into three stages: (1) a full and complete atoning sacrifice at the cross followed by (2) a continual, atoning ministry in the holy place in applying the blood of His sacrifice ultimately terminated by (3) a final atonement in the Most Holy Place, which fully effects the at-one-ing sacrifice. **END MY RESPONSE]**

NOT "YOU HAVE TO BEFORE PROBATION ENDS"

" 'Perfectionism' is not a safe topic. But perfection is a Bible teaching. We cannot reach a goal that we are not aware of. Perhaps that's one reason why we are not told about it. We don't have to spend a lot of time dwelling on what we must be, but we can spend some useful, thankful hours dwelling on what we can be. There's a big difference between saying, "You have to reach this goal by the time probation closes," and saying, "God is going to lead His people to victory." There's a big difference between saying, "I must," and saying, "He can." FTW, 368. .

FOLLOW ONLY IN SERVICE

" 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me' (Matthew 19:21) I had real problems with that text for a long time, because I said, "How can a person be perfect, and then come and follow Jesus?" It seemed to me that one would have to get with Jesus first or he could never hope to be perfect. But as I took a deeper look at that text I began to see that Jesus was telling him, telling us, how to be perfect. Jesus is talking about much more than just money. Get rid of whatever you have. You may be rich in talent. Stop depending upon your talent. You may be rich in good looks and are overcome every time you look in the mirror! Get rid of you gook looks. I mean, of course, get rid of your dependence upon them. Don't depend on your brains,

or your education, or your social status, or anything else. Sell all that you have, in terms of depending upon it. Get rid of all the things that you depend on in any way as a substitute for depending upon Jesus. And come to Him, having given up on yourself."

"And then follow Him. What was that added for? Jesus said it in another place, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). He is talking about following Him in service." JSAP, 9.

[Don't follow Him in resisting sin and obeying God; only follow Him in helping others.]

ONLY COME-TILL THE SECOND ADVENT

"Do you realize that you are a sinner? Do you realize that you are helpless to do anything about it? And have you come to the point of giving up on ever being able to do anything about it? Then you can come to Jesus, just as you are, because those are the steps to Him. God is drawing you to Him, and you can respond, and continue to come to Him tomorrow morning and the next, until Jesus Himself comes again." TKG,41.

SAVED SINNERS

"He [Paul] was talking about the fact that apart from God we are sinful by nature and that only by the grace of God can we experience anything else. I'm thankful that it is possible to be a saved sinner. But it's important to realize that we will continue to be sinful by nature until Jesus comes again." TKG, 44.

AFTER PROBATION CLOSES

SINNERS TILL JESUS COMES

0 "We are sinners by nature, and will remain so until Jesus comes again. Please notice that we are sinners by birth, and that we will continue to be sinners by nature, until Jesus comes again, whether we're sinning or not." FTW, 162.

[There is a truth here, but there is also an emphasis that leads us in the direction of other statements of his that indicate that it will be all right to sin till Jesus returns.]

WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE SINNERS

"The only way a Christian can live is by faith, and only by faith, and by faith only. This is possible because of our nature. Apart from Christ we are sinners. And we will continue to be sinners until Jesus comes. This doesn't mean that we have to keep sinning. It means that we will continue to be sinners. Our only hope is in connection with Him. We know this is true because of the nature of surrender. Surrender is giving up on ourselves." 4 AUC CM.

HOW TO OBEY

"I will try to put all this in the simplest possible terms. If you enter into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and continue that relationship with Him from now until He comes again, He will do the rest. That's the simplest answer to the question of how to obey. Forgiveness is a gift, salvation is a gift, and obedience is a gift, all to be received through continuing fellowship and communion with the One who is the giver." TK6,100.101.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

"Obedience can come only by faith, first of all, because of the nature of mankind. We are sinners. We will be sinners until Jesus comes, and sinners cannot produce obedience. Second, obedience can come only by faith, because since we are sinners and cannot produce obedience apart from God, all we can do is give up ever hoping to produce any real obedience. The only thing we can do is surrender, give up on ourselves, submitting totally to the control of Jesus Christ." FTW, 175.

LIVE WITHOUT SINNING-BY TRUST ALONE

"So the answer to the question, 'Can anyone live without sinning?', is Yes. Jesus did. Can we, with emphasis on we? The answer is No. Romans 8:7, the sinful mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Romans 3:23,

all have sinned. So we cannot live without sinning. . Can anyone live without sinning? Jesus did. Can we? No, we can't. Must we? Yes. How? The same way Jesus did, by trusting in a power above us." ROE, 95, 98. .

WE CAN'T BE SINLESS

"When we talk about overcoming sin, we are not talking about being sinless. If a person were able to stop sinning today, he would still not be sinless because of his sinful nature." ROE,99.

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CHAPTER TWELVE-REVIEW OF 'NEVER WITHOUT AN INTERCESSOR' BOOK

INRODUCTION

A Response to Morris L. Venden's, Never Without An Intercessor, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 1996).

Morris Venden will doubtless be remembered as one of the most curious yet tragic figures of modern Adventist history.

If for no other reason, many Adventists in the second half of the twentieth century can thank the ministry of Morris Venden for inspiring them to take seriously their personal walk with God, and to start a regular devotional life of daily Bible study.

Yet the fundamental errors of Morris Venden's salvation theology and his view of the church's spiritual priorities continue to prevent clarity of understanding among many contemporary Adventists, and bear perhaps a larger blame even than the teachings of Desmond Ford for the spiritual state of the modern Seventh-day Adventist Church. Never Without An Intercessor, demonstrates the continuing problem his theology poses for the perceptions and travail of God's end-time people.

In his 1975 book Sail Your Own Seas, George Vandeman repeated a warning of C.S. Lewis which many Adventists seem to have missed.

In a chapter titled "Fire Trucks and Floods," Vandeman cites Lewis's reference to a demon called Screwtape, whose scheme was to get people "'running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood.' Get people to crowd to the side of the boat that is already nearly under. When people are lukewarm and apathetic, get them stirred up about the dangers of enthusiasm and emotion. If they are lazy, talk to them about the hypocrisy of the working community. If they are cruel, warn them against the evils of sentimentality. . . . In other words, let them hear loudly and repeatedly the warnings they don't need."¹

The theology of Morris Venden perhaps best epitomizes the modern Adventist obsession with the dangers of legalism. (We will sidestep for a moment the issue of what legalism is and is not, according to Inspiration. For now it will suffice to consider whether or not the all-consuming preoccupation with rules and behavior which Venden finds so noxious is really the church's present danger.) It doesn't seem to matter that Inspiration depicts a far different peril as dominant in the

end-time church.² Nor does it seem to matter that today's Adventism is a far different universe from the finger-pointing, obedience-saturated subculture in which (from his writing one would think) Venden had been raised.

The swelling floodwaters of worldliness and laxity in today's church remain insufficient to persuade Venden and others like him to put away their fire extinguishers. Such persons persist in the assumption, despite the clearest contrary evidence, that modern Adventists remain just as works-centered, law-obsessed, and pharisaical as they have ever been. The book under discussion contains a chapter titled, "Good News for Legalists" (pp. 115-127), and another titled, "Good News for Pharisees" (pp. 129-137). Most would see these two as one and the same. There is no chapter titled, "Good News for Liberals," or anything comparable. Despite his brief attention to Sadducee-style liberalism (pp. 130-135), Venden apparently doesn't see the liberal threat as sufficiently serious to warrant an entire chapter.

Throughout the pages of Never Without An Intercessor, Venden makes plain the spiritual time warp where his theology remains imprisoned. He even writes at one point: "Sometimes we get in too much of a hurry to take people's names off the church record" (p. 106). Perhaps this was true in Venden's youth, and perhaps in some places now, but a fair number of contemporary church members could attest to the reality of the exact opposite problem. The spiritual matrix of Venden's nurturing perhaps best described in a sermon of his I heard years ago was one in which "self-appointed religious watchdogs" (his words) stood at the church door handing typed rebukes from the Testimonies to various members. Today's church is one in which many First World Adventists, especially the younger ones, hear the Testimonies quoted hardly at all judiciously or otherwise, in context or out of context.

Elsewhere Venden writes:

"From the cradle on up, every one of us have had to live with the system of merit" (p. 15).

"It has been a universal disease of humanity that we want to be worthy" (p. 17).

"We are disciples of the make-your-own-way, the pull-your-own-way system. We are capable, self-reliant, high-achieving" (p. 26).

"Most of us continue to work hard, trying to be overcomers" (p. 99).

A sensible man in the street, unfamiliar with the cross-currents of Adventism's past or present, would likely find it more than a bit strange to characterize our contemporary society as obsessed with spiritual worthiness or to characterize such a quest as a "universal disease of humanity." (Trying to be worthy in our own strength is certainly a disease, but can this truly be said about the very desire for worthiness?) To speak of our contemporary culture as "capable, self-reliant, high-achieving" likewise belies much of the societal reality confronted by modern First World Adventists those who generally comprise Morris Venden's audiences.

The world of the Adventist pioneers not to mention the family heritage and spiritual climate of Venden's childhood was a world inhabited by gutsy missionaries, unpopular faith, and hard work vastly beyond the experience of a society in which dinner is ready at the buzz of a microwave and

global data available with the click of a mouse! (The mention on pp. 17-18 of the dying missionary with family buried in distant lands may be relevant to the Adventism of Venden's early life, but it is hardly familiar to a generation whose fleeting brush with mission service involves little more than teaching in a language school in pleasant surroundings with ample funds from home.)

Put simply, the world of Adventism's past was tailor-made for a theology which emphasized duty and diligence. By contrast, today's culture of credit cards, instant orange juice, and quick gratification in a thousand forms is tailor-made for a very different theology--one providing effortless security and the gleeful abandonment of painful toil.

Theologians, like politicians, have a difficult time admitting error. Listening to Venden through the years, including my reading of the book under discussion, reminds me of Harvey Cox, the liberal Harvard theologian who years ago wrote a book called The Secular City, which insisted that modern man had outgrown religious faith and that religion's capacity to impact society in any serious way was over. Not long thereafter, it seems, Cox had second thoughts. He wrote another book called Religion in the Secular City, which acknowledged that in fact religion was not dead, but still very much possessed of social and political strength. But since it would have been too embarrassing to just say, "I was wrong," Cox continued to place his new awareness in the framework used before. He couldn't bring himself to admit that the "secular city" was a mistaken perception. Despite growing evidence to the contrary, he insisted on depicting the power of contemporary religion in the context of a society he still holds to be secular. Cox demonstrates what can happen when reality crashes in on cherished thought patterns.

The theology of Morris Venden demonstrates the same problem. Because he has long convinced himself that legalism is Adventism's big problem, he refuses to permit the rising tide of liberalism and worldliness in the contemporary church to change his basic perception. He can't simply admit that legalism is merely one of the church's current problems; he maintains without any inspired authority that all the church's problems are manifestations of legalism. He speaks of "traditional legalists" and "gospel legalists" (p. 50), "scarlet legalists" and "black legalists" (p. 116). He even insists that we were all "born legalists" (pp. 116,119).

(First we have original sin; now original legalism?) Again, these pronouncements are made without any inspired basis, either in Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy. Never mind that Scripture speaks of the great end-time conflict in terms of obedience to God's commandments or the lack thereof (Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14), or that Ellen White declares that "obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world."³ Venden persists, despite the absence of inspired proof, in painting the final conflict in darker or lighter shades of legalism.

Many contemporary Adventists defend the approach used by Venden and others in this regard, because they maintain that the presumed legalism of our past is largely responsible for the worldliness and ambiguity of the present. Zealous to "lay the ax at the root of the tree," they set about to demolish what they claim to be the legalistic foundation of the church's current problems. We can't deny that to a degree this concern is justified. Sacred history offers numerous cases of how, when religious symbols and landmarks are taken for granted, God permits them to be challenged or even lost. The ark of the covenant and Solomon's Temple are two good examples. But we need to be careful here. Unless we know from Inspiration what legalism truly is, the cure can wind up worse than the illness as indeed it has! Moreover, to assume that the modern Adventist rebellion against our Bible-based doctrines and standards could have been avoided if only we had

given these aspects of our faith a more Christ-centered focus, gives more credit to human judgment and experience than the inspired sources allow.

Our Dale Carnegie-like obsession with winning friends and influencing people tends to overlook the reality of the sacred record that the most consecrated of God's messengers through the ages, including the Master Himself, faced rejection and revilement by the majority. Can we truly be safe in concluding that this rejection occurred because their flawed humanity got in the way? We might be safe in concluding this if all except Jesus had experienced this rejection. But since the Personification of love Himself "came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1:11), we must beware of deciding too quickly that the rejection of truth is most likely the fault of those presenting it. Too often, when I hear yesterday's legalism denounced as the root of today's liberalism, I wonder if the true core of this analysis is a trust in people ("if only we had treated them right, they wouldn't have done this") not warranted by the message of Scripture.

Careful students of Inspiration on both sides of Adventism's current divide find it a truly herculean task to harmonize the anti-legalist obsession of the contemporary church with the pattern of emphasis found throughout the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. It is little wonder that Venden remains one of the few thought leaders in contemporary Adventism who still promotes easy salvation while simultaneously adhering to a professedly conservative view of the inspired sources. To those promoting such a message, logic and the weight of evidence matter little. The nonexistent middle ground is sought with a fanatical persistence reminiscent of Francisco Coronado's search for the Seven Cities of Gold. One recalls the observations of Texas radio host Jim Hightower that all one finds in the middle of the road are "yellow stripes and dead armadillos."

EXPERIENCE-DRIVEN THEOLOGY

Venden rightly offers the following warnings:

"One of our biggest temptations is to adjust our theology to match our experience, instead of finding out how to change our experience to match God's theology" (p. 33).

"Trying to decide truth on the basis of experience is a very dangerous thing. It's called 'existentialism' and will lead you into error" (p. 76; see also p. 122).

And without question, the following observations are pointedly accurate:

"The dialogue concerning the investigative judgment and related topics within our church today seems primarily an attempt to settle on our beliefs concerning sin and righteousness and salvation. The investigative judgment, as an historical and eschatological event, is not really threatening. . . . It's not our lack of understanding of how Daniel 8 relates to Leviticus 16 that causes the sleepless nights. It's our lack of understanding of how the apparent bad news of the judgment relates to the good news of the gospel" (pp. 7-8).

"And in spite of our attempts to hide our real concern, we would have to admit that it isn't so much what Ellen White said about the geological

formation of volcanoes, for instance, that we're having trouble with. The problem is what she said about sin and righteousness. I don't think that people are so worried about whether she borrowed material from William Hanna or Alfred Edersheim or Uriah Smith. I think they are worried about what she had to say concerning sin and righteousness" (pp. 33-34).

Quite true. But neither Scripture nor Ellen White is fully considered in Venden's own theology of sin and righteousness, as we will see. And as for theology based on experience, Venden has veered into such paths himself. Speaking of the signs of Jesus' coming, Venden writes:

"The time is just about up, and we're still not overcomers" (p. 33).

Perhaps we need to beware of judging others by ourselves. More people may be overcoming "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11) than we realize.

Elsewhere Venden writes:

"When I remember all the efforts to overcome that I have put forth in the past, from my teenage years on, it is wearisome just to think about it. I had seven sins at one time. And I was working hard on them when someone sent me a list of one hundred more to work on" (p. 102).

It seems that Venden's deep revulsion at the role of human effort in salvation, which we will examine shortly, is based more on his own experience than on the careful study of Inspiration. Vast reaches of inspired material, which flatly contradict his cherished views, are left unexplained in this and his other books.

IMBALANCE

Venden's review of a number of Christ's parables reveals an exclusive mention of one variety with utter silence regarding the other. Nearly the entire first chapter of Never Without An Intercessor is devoted to the parable of the eleventh-hour workers and the equal pay given to all despite the hours worked (pp. 12-20). This parable is again cited alongside that of the lost sheep and the prodigal son, together with pointed jibes at the ninety-and-nine sheep and the jealous older brother (pp. 25,28).

Such an emphasis is not inappropriate, to be sure. But Jesus told other parables in addition to these. **He told of a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field, who must sell all he has in order to purchase that field (Matt. 13:44). He told of another who sells all his possessions to buy a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45-46). He told of a man cast into outer darkness for not putting his talent to the exchanges (Matt. 25:27-30), and of the sheep and goats whose eternal destiny is determined by their treatment of fellow humans (Matt. 25:31-46). In commenting on the parable of the pearl, Ellen White brings together the emphasis of Scripture on salvation as a gift and those parables which present man's responsibility in the saving process:**

"In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing

obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price."⁴

In other words, those parables which emphasize God's initiative in salvation (such as those in Luke 15 on the seeking of the lost) help us understand that God is the exclusive source of the power and grace which saves us. Those parables which emphasize man's responsibility (like those in Matthew 13 and 25) help us understand that God's grace cannot save us without our active cooperation. And since all the gifts we possess at any time belong to God, we cannot claim credit for our cooperation with God's grace any more than we can for the grace itself. As King David declared, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14). Venden's desire to debunk what he calls the "merit system" of salvation is laudable, but doing so does not require the removal of human effort from the saving process. It only requires the acknowledgement that all self-discipline, backbone, and talents of all sorts with which a person is born are as much the gift of God as the power bestowed at conversion. To understand this is to recognize the utter foolishness of claiming credit for cooperating with God's power in the work of overcoming. Ellen White explains this point at great length in the first chapter of Faith and Works, where she writes: "So the satisfaction of creature merit cannot be in returning to the Lord His own, for it was always His own property to be used as He in His providence should direct" (read entire section for context).⁵

In Ellen White's words: "God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character."⁶ The two sets of parables, like all inspired counsel, fit together beautifully. But when one set is emphasized and the other ignored, imbalance will surely result. Morris Venden's theology is Exhibit A of such imbalance.

THE ROLE OF HUMAN EFFORT

The most basic error of Venden's salvation theology, the one whose implications have been most tragic for the contemporary church, is represented by the following statements:

"If you follow this (Eph. 2:8) 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" (p. 81).

"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. . . . And no one will ever overcome sin until he or she understands the difference between the fight of faith and the fight of sin. Testimonies for the Church, 5:513 says, 'If you fight the fight of faith with all your will power, you will conquer.' Which means that if I'm using all of my willpower in the faith relationship, I have no willpower left to fight sin or the devil" (pp. 82-83).

"We have been wasting time and energy trying to 'sin not,' when the time and effort and energy is supposed to go toward abiding in Him" (p. 85).

"It is not true that Jesus does it all, because Jesus cannot seek Himself for us. Here is where our will and our willpower and our human effort has to go, toward seeking Jesus in an ongoing relationship with Him day by day.

He does not do it all. He cannot seek Himself for us. But Jesus has promised that if we will seek relationship with Him, He will work to keep us from falling. And what Jesus has promised, He is able to perform. He does not need my help for that. So it is very crucial in coming to the place of overcoming sin that we understand clearly the difference between the fight of faith and the fight of sin" (pp. 85-86, italics supplied).

"I'd like to remind you that overcoming is God's department; it's not yours. Obedience is God's department. It comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ. It isn't something we achieve; it's something we receive. Victory isn't something that we strive for, try for, or work hard to get" (p. 99).

"No, we don't overcome the devil. We never have overcome the devil or any of his manifestations. James 4:7 says, 'Resist the devil.' But it tells us how. We resist the devil by 'drawing nigh to God,' and submitting unto God. But we, per se, never overcome the devil or any of his manifestations.

"So, what this text (Rev. 3:5) is talking about overcoming is the real sin problem: living life apart from God. . . . Please underscore, in this text, the difference between a behavior-centered interpretation, overcoming our sins or bad behavior, and a relationship-centered interpretation, overcoming the relationship problem of living life apart from God" (pp. 102-103, italics original).

Venden's exclusion of cooperative effort from the overcoming process is perhaps most emphatic in the following statement:

"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 I am involved, filthy rags. Any kind of righteousness or obedience or victory or overcoming that I am in any way trying to produce is going to be imperfect. . . .

"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 suggested 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" (p. 125).

This "relationship" theology, in its varied forms, lies at the heart of contemporary Adventism's doctrinal chaos, moral vacillation, and loss of purpose. The logic it produces is simple: Why disturb the saints by preaching on obedience when obedience isn't their responsibility anyway? One might well ask why both Scripture and Ellen White spend so many column inches exhorting believers on the specifics of personal holiness if this isn't where our focus belongs. If this "relationship" theology were true, it's hard to see why God didn't do the church a favor by leaving such specifics completely out of the inspired documents, thus leaving such matters to be defined solely by each Christian's personal relationship with God.

There is another popular Adventist revivalist, who takes an approach similar to Venden's on these issues. He had preached a sermon with great emphasis on the verse where Paul states, "For I

determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). For this speaker, "any thing" seemed to include discussions of doctrine and behavior as well as the human philosophizing clearly addressed by Paul in context. Yet if this were so, why does Paul then spend nearly all of the subsequent chapters giving the Corinthians a detailed lecture on correct Christians beliefs and conduct? Obviously for the apostle, preaching Christ and Him crucified meant the most decided proclamation of the doctrinal and moral substance which in God's Word defines what Christ is all about.

Inspiration so strongly contradicts Venden's view of the overcoming process that one is amazed more haven't noticed. What follows are a number of areas where this is most obvious:

1. "BY FAITH ALONE."

Venden's denial of the role of human effort in the battle with evil is based on a common misconception--an evangelical fallacy which decades ago found its way into modern Adventism--that salvation "by faith alone" (p. 99) means faith as distinct from the obedience faith produces. The idea is that when the Bible says we aren't saved by works (Rom. 3:20,28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9), this supposedly means any human activity, including what is done in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. But the Bible never teaches, in contrast with evangelical theology, that the works which don't save include Spirit-empowered obedience. The Bible is clear that the renewing and sanctifying of the Holy Spirit is indeed part of the saving process (2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5), and that salvation is accomplished through man working out what God works in (Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:27-29).

What the Bible teaches about faith and works is easily understood once the Bible is permitted to explain itself, devoid of the confusion imposed upon it by theologians and those seeking accommodation for their experience. Scripture is as clear as possible that gaining eternal life is conditional on obedience (Matt. 19:17; Luke 10:25-28; Rom. 2:6-10; 8:13; Heb. 5:9). But the Bible is equally clear that this condition cannot be fulfilled in our lives apart from faith (Heb. 11:6; see also Rom. 14:23). After Jesus declared to the rich young ruler that commandment-keeping was the condition for receiving eternal life (Matt. 19:17), the disciples asked, "Who then can be saved" (verse 25). Jesus answered, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (verse 26; see also John 15:5). In this sense salvation is like reaching a destination by car. In order to reach my destination I must get in my car and drive where I need to go. But unless I have gas in the car, this is impossible. The gas in the car is faith. Driving the car is obedience. The latter is the condition for reaching my destination, while the former is the means whereby fulfilling this condition is possible.

Over and over again, Ellen White defines "legal religion" as ritual religion, trying to fulfill God's law in our own strength.⁷ Never is legal religion, or legalism, ever defined by Inspiration as trying to be saved through divine-human cooperation. The modern Adventist "righteousness by faith" movement, epitomized in many ways by the teachings of Morris Venden, has failed to make Inspiration's clear distinction between religious activity apart from conversion and religious activity produced by conversion. This failure has resulted in the widespread de-emphasis of the particulars of obedience in the pulpits and publications of the church, the consequence of which has been widespread personal and institutional disregard for the written counsel of God.

2. THE "FIGHT OF FAITH" AND THE "FIGHT OF SIN."

This distinction has been a staple of Morris Venden's theology for years. As the above quotations demonstrate, the so-called "fight of faith" involves effort toward maintaining a relationship with Jesus through prayer, Bible study and witnessing. Here is where all inspired statements which speak of effort in the Christian life are restrictively applied, regardless of what the statements actually say. By contrast, the "fight of sin," as Venden calls it, involves direct confrontation with sin and Satan, which he claims the Christian must leave entirely to God.

But the Bible makes no such distinction. The apostle Paul declares: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). Of course he proceeds to explain that this is to be done through taking the armor of faith (verses 13-17). But the passage gives no hint that taking this armor means someone else will do the fighting for us. Verse 12 is clear that we wrestle against principalities and powers; God doesn't do the wrestling for us. God provides the power, but it remains ours to exercise. For Venden to insist that "we don't overcome the devil" (p.102, italics original), that "if I'm using all of my willpower in the faith relationship, I have no willpower left to fight sin or the devil" (p. 83), is to contradict the plain statements of Scripture. Paul is unmistakably clear in Ephesians six that God empowers us to fight the devil; He does not fight the devil in our place.

Venden's claim that "we don't overcome the devil" (p. 102) is hard to reconcile with 1 John 2:13-14, which in the space of two verses declares twice, "Ye have overcome the wicked one." Paul writes: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Of course it is faith which makes this overcoming and self-cleansing possible (1 John 5:4-5). But nowhere does the Bible define man's faith-relationship with God the way Morris Venden does as a struggle to "abide in Jesus" through prayer, Bible study and witnessing, while Jesus does all the dirty work of defeating sin and Satan.

Regarding a similar verse, Venden writes:

"James 4:7 says, 'Resist the devil.' But it tells us how. We resist the devil by 'drawing nigh to God,' and submitting unto God. But we, per se, never overcome the devil or any of his manifestations" (p. 102, italics original).

But the verse doesn't say that submitting and drawing nigh to God mean we no longer resist Satan, supposedly relinquishing this responsibility to God while we keep out of His way. Rather, the verse is clear as is Ephesians 6:12-17 that submission and drawing nigh give us power to resist, much as the armor of faith gives this power. In no way do these Scriptures imply, especially as we place them alongside other passages, that faith means the total abandonment by the Christian of the struggle with sin, letting Christ do it all in our place.

Morris Venden professes great respect, in this book and others, for the writings of Ellen White. He speaks of how both the investigative judgment and the Spirit of Prophecy are under attack in the church today (p. 33). Yet he seems not to have considered the extent to which Ellen White's writings explicitly contradict his view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.

Venden sees the "fight of faith" and the fight against sin and Satan as two different things. Yet Ellen White says they are one and the same:

"The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith."⁸

"We must come, we must resist the Devil, we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, we must run the race with patience, we must fight the fight of faith, we must wrestle with principalities and powers, we must agonize before God in prayer, if we would stand blameless before the throne of God. We must have the faith that works, or it will be powerless."⁹

No hint of any kind can be found, in these or any inspired statements, that God will fight sin and wrestle against principalities in our place so long as we pray and have faith.

Other Ellen White statements make it as clear as possible that while God's imparted strength is essential to the conquest of evil, the work of conquering evil remains our work.

"The fact that Christ has conquered should inspired His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan."¹⁰

"Our part is to put away sin, to seek with determination for perfection of character. As we thus work, God cooperates with us."¹¹

"It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement."¹²

"Each day he [the Christian] must renew his consecration, each day do battle with evil. Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ's strength for victory."¹³

"We have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues to the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts."¹⁴

"There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act. The soul must be kept from every stain, through faith in Him who is able to keep you from falling."¹⁵

One must defy the simplest rules of grammar and syntax to read into these statements the idea that man's only struggle in the saving process is to keep "in relationship" while any direct confrontation with sin or Satan is to be left completely to God. The above passages repeatedly declare the opposite that in fact we are to struggle with sin and Satan, using the strength God gives us.

Venden's determination to subtract human effort from the overcoming process causes him to add his own words to one of Ellen White's well-known passages about living without a mediator during the time of trouble. To the statement in Great Controversy, p. 425, which states: "Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil," Venden adds in parentheses after the word "effort" ("to continually receive the grace of God") (p. 71). Thus Venden seeks to force the thoughts of Inspiration into the "relationship" mold, as if Ellen White

taught his own theory that striving to receive God's grace and striving against evil through that grace are two different things. It is most dangerous to add our own theological opinions to the words of Inspiration. We do well to remember Ellen White's warning:

"In reading the Testimonies be sure not to mix in your filling of words; for this makes it impossible for the hearers to distinguish between the word of the Lord to them and your words."¹⁶

3. GOD "DOES NOT NEED MY HELP."

Venden writes:

"Jesus has promised that if we will seek relationship with Him, He will work to keep us from falling. And what Jesus has promised, He is able to perform. He does not need my help for that" (p. 85).

Perhaps not. But whether God needs our help or not isn't the issue. Ellen White's commentary on the resurrection of Lazarus helps us understand that while God doesn't need our help, He gives us the chance to cooperate actively with Him as a means of teaching responsibility:

"'Take ye away the stone.' Christ could have commanded the stone to move, and it would have obeyed His voice. He could have bidden the angels who were close by His side to do this. At His bidding, invisible hands would have removed the stone. But it was to be taken away by human hands. Thus Christ would show that humanity is to cooperate with divinity. What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do. God does not dispense with man's aid. He strengthens him, co-operating with him as he uses the powers and capabilities given him."¹⁷

To insist, as does Venden, that God "does not need my help" in the work of overcoming sin is to miss the point. God doesn't need our help to witness for Him either something Venden holds to be very much a Christian duty. Angels could do a far better job of carrying the gospel to the world. But God has given this task to human beings, to be performed in His strength. The same is true of salvation.

As we have seen, Venden denies emphatically that humans have any cooperative role with God in the battle with sin. Again we note 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" (p. 125).

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).

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). 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 Venden claims:

"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."¹⁹

In the context of a statement we've quoted already, Venden tries again to explain what our part is in salvation, as well as God's part:

"It is not true that Jesus does it all, because Jesus cannot seek Himself for us. Here is where our will and our willpower and our human effort has to go toward seeking Jesus in an ongoing relationship with Him day by day. He does not do it all. He cannot seek Himself for us. But Jesus has promised that if we will seek relationship with Him, He will work to keep us from falling. And what Jesus has promised, He is able to perform. He does not need my help for that" (p. 85).

But Jesus stated quite clearly that seeking is not enough, that we must strive also:

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Ellen White comments as follows on this verse:

"We are to strive, to agonize, to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. It will take something more than mere seeking to enter in at the strait gate; for the gate to death is wide, and the road broad, and easy of access, and many there be that go in thereat."²⁰

And what is this work we must do, which involves more than seeking?

"When we read that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, then we want to understand what we shall do in order to succeed. This to us is a mournful statement, that there are those who will fail to enter in at the strait gate because they only seek to enter in, and do not strive. . . .

"The pitying Saviour stands right by your side to help you. He would send every angel out of glory while you are struggling to overcome sin, so that Satan cannot have the victory over you. Christ . . . took man's human nature upon Him that He might come right down to man in the temptation wherewith man is beset. The pitiful Redeemer knows just how to help us in every one of our strivings."²¹

Elsewhere Ellen White again affirms that our part in salvation is the putting away of sin, through active cooperation with God's power:

"In the work of salvation the grace of Christ is united with a willing and obedient service, on the part of man. The sincerity of our profession of love to God will be made manifest by our earnest endeavors to fulfill the requirements of His law. Those who are the servants of God will renounce all evil habits and associations. There will be constant and earnest efforts made to lift up the soul from its defilement. . . .

"We are not to be altogether passive, thinking that there has been no task allotted to those who would win immortality. No, no; God calls upon us to do our best with the powers that He has given us to put to the stretch every faculty, and exercise every ability, that we may not fail of everlasting life. That man can be saved in indolence, in inactivity, is an utter impossibility. There is a constant conflict before those who would win eternal life. Faith and works go hand in hand. That man has nothing to do but to believe, is a fallacy and a most dangerous doctrine. . . .

"You are to open the door of the heart. You are to clear away the rubbish from the portals, and throw wide the door, that the heavenly Guest may find a welcome and an entrance. Christ will not enter a heart that is defiled with sin. It is our work to put away all iniquity."²²

Again we recall Venden's claim: "Overcoming is God's department; it's not yours. . . . Victory isn't something that we strive for, try for, or work hard to get" (p. 99). Reading the above inspired statements, we are forced to decide: Will we believe human theories, or the explicit counsel of God?

4. "SIN" AND "SINS."

Venden's effort to read Hebrews 12:4 and through his own doctrinal lenses likewise takes him away from the Biblical consensus. Hebrews 12:4 declares, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Venden comments as follows on this verse:

"Jesus is our example here. And Jesus never strove against sins. . . . He didn't struggle with sins, but He did struggle with Sin, unto blood. And the devil pushed all the way, trying to get Jesus to separate from His Father, which is the real issue in Sin" (pp. 110-111, italics original).

But the Bible nowhere makes a distinction between "sins" and "Sin." The Bible nowhere teaches that first we separate from God, then commit specific acts of sin. Just the opposite is the teaching of Scripture:

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

Venden spends an entire chapter insisting that Revelation 3:5, which speaks of overcoming sin as a prerequisite for retaining our names in the book of life, must be viewed through a "relationship-centered interpretation" rather than a "behavior-centered interpretation" (pp. 102-103). Once again, this is a distinction of which the Bible knows nothing. While Venden is correct in stating that the

white raiment described in this verse refers to imparted rather than imputed righteousness (p. 103), he seems not to understand the implication of his reference to Revelation 19:7, which speaks of how "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (p. 103). He goes on to indicate correctly, again that modern translations are more accurate than the King James Version in stating that "the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (RSV) (pp. 103-104). The bride making herself ready sounds like considerable effort, as I suspect most brides would attest! Yet it is effort performed with joy, as efforts to overcome will be for every converted Christian.

5. "NOT ONE THREAD OF HUMAN DEVISING."

Venden quotes Ellen White's statement that the robe of Christ's righteousness "has in it not one thread of human devising" (p. 104).²³ He then comments: "None of our work is mixed up in it at all. It is totally God's robe" (p. 104). Without question it is totally God's robe, but to say the absence of human devising means the absence of human effort is to make Ellen White contradict herself. On the previous page Venden quotes Ellen White's statement that "by the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess" (p. 104).²⁴ And how is this character formed, according to the same author in the same book?

"God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected."²⁵

Her reference here to hereditary tendencies and unfavorable traits makes it impossible for Venden to explain this statement about "battles with self" as anything other than direct struggles with sin, as his "relationship" theology seeks in vain to do. The lack of "human devising" in the robe of righteousness simply means God gives all the directions and all the power including the power with which we were born (1 Chronicles 29:14).²⁶ But this power, as the above statement makes clear, remains ours to exercise.

After quoting Ellen White's reference to "the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess" (p. 104).²⁷, Venden states: "It doesn't say 'have to' or 'must' possess" (p. 104). But elsewhere Ellen White does say "must" regarding the believer's possession of such a character. She writes:

"So perfect is the character represented which men must have in order to be Christ's disciples that the infidel has said that it is not possible for any human being to attain unto it. But no less a standard must be presented by all who claim to be children of God."²⁸

Without wishing to sound insulting, it is truly dangerous to write books and preach sermons without thoroughly doing one's homework in the inspired documents.

6. DENIAL OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

Any careful scrutiny of personal behavior seems anathema to Morris Venden's theology. He writes:

"One of the main reasons why it takes so long for the fruit to develop is that we insist on swinging back and forth between two extremes first looking to Jesus and depending on His power but then checking ourselves to see how we're doing" (p. 39).

But the Bible commands us: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). How can one see this self-examination as anything other than the scrutiny of one's conduct, especially when the Bible is clear that the genuineness of our faith is shown by our works (James 2:18)? Ellen White is likewise clear on the need for moral self-scrutiny by the Christian:

"Closely criticize the temper, the disposition, the thoughts, words, inclinations, purposes, and deeds. How can we ask intelligently for the things we need unless we prove by the Scriptures the condition of our spiritual health?"²⁹

"Every follower of Christ should daily examine himself, that he may become perfectly acquainted with his own conduct. There is with nearly all a neglect of self-examination. This neglect is positively dangerous in one who professes to be a mouthpiece for God."³⁰

"The daily review of our acts, to see whether conscience approves or condemns, is necessary for all who wish to arrive at the perfection of Christian character."³¹

7. PRACTICAL CONFUSION.

Error always creates needless dilemmas and blurred awareness of spiritual reality. The confusion created by Venden's theology in many Adventist minds is illustrated by what he calls the "blue letter," apparently sent to him by one confused by the practical implications of Venden's "let go and let God" teachings. Following are some lines from this letter:

"How does one go about fighting his appetite? Does he just tell God he can't control it, ask him to control it for him, and give Him his will? And then let God make him not want to eat?"

"In the meantime, when he's hungry, should he take diet pills to help God out? . . .

"Should I go ahead and eat while I wait for God to take away the desire? . . .

"I have read a lot of answers and promises, in the Bible and spirit of prophecy and other places. I've experienced the solution to many problems--but this time I'm baffled. Maybe I'm impatient or looking for an easy way out. But I think I'm being honest with God and myself. How literal are these instructions? I am anxious for your reply because the hang-up hangs on! (pp. 120-121).

I would suggest that perhaps the true source of this person's confusion is the "other places," in addition to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, where she is getting her ideas about Christian living. Venden accentuates this confusion by his own response:

"Soon after I received the 'blue letter,' I took it with me to a minister's meeting and began to ask around for some answers from my colleagues" (p. 122).

How about answers from Inspiration? How about putting this entire "relationship" theology under the microscope of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy? To be sure, practical dilemmas are not absent from a life strictly obedient to what God says. But dilemmas created by mere human ideas are quite unnecessary. At the bottom line, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out just how absurd this "let go and let God" theology really is, from the standpoint of simple logic as well as inspired counsel. This "blue letter" illustrates this lack of logic all too well. If God is assumed to do "all the work" of overcoming our sins, just what does this mean? Is the one struggling with diet, temper, lust, or any number of problems to expect God to make them feel like doing right, subduing their fleshly desires without effort on their part? If so, where does such a promise exist in the inspired writings? Are we talking about the obliteration of fleshly desires in the Christian something Inspiration flatly denies will happen?³²

We see yet again a compelling argument for abandoning all theology-based and experience-driven theories about Christian living, and basing our views entirely on the written counsel of God regardless of the experiential and spiritual discomfort this might bring.

CHRIST'S INTERCESSION: CONFUSION AND FALSE ISSUES

Venden's claim, represented by the title of the book in question, that Christians are "never without an intercessor" even after probation's close, is fraught with irrelevant statements, misperception of historic Adventist views, and the mingling of truth and error.

Three points in Venden's discussion of Christ's mediatorial work deserve attention:

1. Living "on our own power."

Venden makes the following statements about the historic Adventist belief that God's people, during the great time of trouble, will live without an intercessor:

"A lot of people believe, based on a couple of paragraphs in the book *The Great Controversy*, that during the time of trouble that follows the close of probation, Christians are going to have to live on their own power.

"Have you heard that? Have you heard that you'll have to live without an intercessor? . . .

"Some have gotten the idea that we're going to need enough righteousness stored up in our batteries, or enough righteousness by habit or momentum, to kind of carry us through this time, when we'll be on our own" (p. 58).

"Don't tell me that there has to be a time, during the time of trouble ahead, when we'll live on our own steam. That is just not possible" (p. 59).

"He's still holding to His original promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway.' Does He say, 'Even till the close of probation?' No! He says, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20)" (pp. 60-61).

Of all the Adventists I'm familiar with--now and throughout our history--who have taught final-generation perfection, I know of absolutely none who have ever taught that Christians after probation's close will "live on their own power" (p. 58). The only thing living without a mediator has ever meant in any writings or teachings of such persons that I've known is living without the continuous availability of forgiveness. Herbert E. Douglass, one of the more prominent advocates of this theology in late twentieth-century Adventism, makes this point as clear as possible:

"During this reign of Satan the Christian who has reached the moral perfection that God says can be attained in this life will be saying No, as Jesus said No to all temptations. There will be no stopping place where the Christian may relax his guard or when he may no longer need the sustaining grace of the Holy Spirit."³³

Venden's insistence that we'll always need Christ's mediation because of our past, even after the close of probation, is beside the point. No one has ever denied this. But after probation's close our past sins "have gone beforehand to judgment,"³⁴ and have been totally vanquished in believers' lives.³⁵ Thus no continuous mediation is necessary on account of these past failings.

Christ's promise to be with us till the end of the world (Matt. 28:20) is in no way negated by forgiveness no longer being available after probation's close. We will still need Jesus as well as the Holy Spirit for power, even if forgiveness is no longer continuously available.

2. Other Purposes for Mediation.

Venden quotes Ellen White statements which speak of Christ's mediation benefiting unfallen beings (p. 62),³⁶ as well as keeping us from falling (p. 62).³⁷ Here we see why Ellen White says concerning the use of words by inspired writers: "Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea."³⁸

Certainly the mediatorial work of Christ preserves the unfallen worlds, since what Christ is doing helps to answer any questions the unfallen universe may still have about God's justice. And certainly the forgiveness provided by this mediation for sinners also keeps those sinners from falling, since Biblical forgiveness is not merely a matter of record-keeping. Ellen White indicates this in the following statement:

"God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Psalm 51:10."³⁹

But it remains a fact that the unfallen worlds would not need Christ's mediation were it not for the questions raised by the intrusion of sin. No mediator at all would have been needed had sin not entered God's universe. While it is true that all God's creatures are sustained by His power, this power is not necessarily the same as His grace and mediation. Ellen White speaks of how Adam before the fall could form a righteous character by obedience, but that after the fall, not only forgiveness but a changed heart is needed to render such obedience.⁴⁰ In both cases the power

comes from God, but in the latter case we are talking about a special kind of power not needed by unfallen beings.

The presence of a mediator in any dispute implies the presence of differences. So long as General Motors or Chrysler get along with the United Auto Workers, mediators are not needed. In the case of God and His people, differences are called sins. So long as sin exists in Christian lives, a mediator is needed (1 John 2:1). If sin has been overcome, a mediator is no longer needed. But in no way does this imply that those mediatorial benefits other than forgiveness are no longer needed by overcomers. Despite Venden's insinuation, Adventists who have taught (and continue to teach) the necessity of living without an intercessor during the time of trouble are extremely clear as to what this means: living without the continuous availability of forgiveness, not living without the need for imparted power.

3. Last-Minute Christians.

Here we see a new error introduced into the church regarding the final generation, based on inspired evidence which must be termed dubious at best. Venden asks:

"What about the people who come to Christ thirty minutes before probation closes? They haven't had a lifetime to become transformed by grace and to become overcomers. Will they need any forgiveness during the final time of trouble? Is it possible that someone might lose his patience and need forgiveness for simply wanting to punch out a right-wing Christian Coalition person during the time of trouble? The thief on the cross didn't have any time to grow" (p. 64, italics original).

Though he doesn't come right out and say it, Venden clearly implies that this group will in fact continue to sin after probation closes. Without any Biblical support, he assumes that the reference to the "righteous" and the "holy" in Revelation 22:11 refers to two distinct groups among the saved who endure the time of trouble not seeming to consider that John, like the other Hebrew writers of Scripture, uses words parallel to each other which mean the same thing. Nowhere does the Bible give evidence that these two words mean two separate things, despite the ramblings of some theologians. Ellen White is certainly clear that righteousness and holiness are one and the same thing:

"Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God; and 'God is love.'"⁴¹

The "holy" described in Revelation 22:11, according to Venden, "are holy because they're overcomers, and they're not falling anymore" (p. 65). But the group called "righteous," in his view, are righteous like presumably the thief on the cross "because of Jesus' imputed righteousness" (p. 65). According to Venden, "this group includes those who accept Christ thirty minutes before the close of probation. Are they righteous? Yes. They are covered by Christ's righteousness" (p. 65).

Notice that Venden is careful not to say explicitly that this "righteous" group are still sinning, but that is clearly what he implies, especially when his description of the "righteous" is placed alongside his description on the same page of the "holy," who he claims are "not falling anymore" (p. 65). The implication is obvious: the "righteous" are still occasionally falling.

What about these "thirty minutes to deadline" Christians Venden talks about? First, we need to remember that God is not a slave to time. The close of probation is not arbitrary. It happens only after all have been given sufficient time to adequately respond to the light given. Regarding those who come in at the last during this time, Ellen White has written:

"Some of us have had time to get the truth and to advance step by step, and every step we have taken has given us strength to take the next. But now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a few months."⁴²

In other words, God is not going to arbitrarily close probation on people who haven't had the time to develop the maturity essential to stand without a mediator as part of the final demonstration of perfect holiness. Venden is here creating a completely false issue.

He says, "The thief on the cross didn't have any time to grow" (p. 64). He needs to go back and read The Desire of Ages. Concerning the penitent thief, Ellen White comments:

"This man was not a hardened criminal; he had been led astray by evil associations, but he was less guilty than many of those who stood beside the cross reviling the Saviour. He had seen and heard Jesus, and had been convicted by His teaching, but he had been turned away from Him by the priests and rulers. Seeking to stifle conviction, he had plunged deeper and deeper into sin, until he was arrested, tried as a criminal, and condemned to die on the cross. . . .

"He calls to mind all he has heard of Jesus, how He has healed the sick and pardoned sin. He has heard the words of those who believed in Jesus and followed Him weeping. . . . The Holy Spirit illuminates his mind, and little by little the chain of evidence is joined together."⁴³

In other words, this man didn't need a lot of time to grow. He already knew the truth about Jesus and His mission, and through circumstances and events was at last brought to accept it. There is no inspired evidence at all that God is ever shortchanged by time or place in the work of bringing sinners to a knowledge of truth. To be sure, millions who have died sinning ignorantly will be saved, and Scripture is clear that God winks at the times of our ignorance (Acts 17:30; see also James 4:17). But regarding the sins we already know about, God provides sufficient power in His commands for us to obey them if that power is brought into our lives through conversion and acceptance of the truth. Neither the uncertainties of life nor anything else can force God into improvisational judgments where some celestial "insurance policy" is invoked to cover people who supposedly haven't had time to live the truth they know. In Ellen White's words:

"As long as there is hope, until they resist the Holy Spirit to their eternal ruin, men are guarded by heavenly intelligences."⁴⁴

In defense of his view that some Christians after probation's close will still fall and fail,

Venden quotes an Ellen White statement often used by supporters of the New Theology to "prove" that the final generation isn't quite sinless even during the great time of trouble:

"It is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected."⁴⁵

After quoting this statement, Venden writes:

"Evidently God has a purpose for the stress that His people go through. Under such stress, those who came to Christ thirty minutes before the close of probation may grow as much in a short time as others did in years" (p. 68).

But is this earthliness sin? Other Ellen White statements provide a clue. When seeking to understand Ellen White's writings, we need to remember her stated method of interpretation: "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture."⁴⁶ Speaking of those at the end of time, Ellen White writes elsewhere:

"In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off."⁴⁷

In another statement, using language similar to the "earthliness" statement in Great Controversy, she writes:

"We can never perfect a round, full Christian experience until every earthly support is removed, and the soul centers its entire affections upon God."⁴⁸

To acquire strength and sustenance from earthly support (family, friends, material needs, etc.) is not sin. God does not forbid the Christian to have earthly support systems. But our faith will not be ultimately tested and proved unless such support is no longer available, and we must rely completely on God. The above statement about the cutting off of earthly support in the final conflict is stated in the context of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, when He was deprived of both physical nourishment and human sympathy. The other statement advised someone to learn to trust God instead of human friends for daily strength. It isn't sinful to desire physical food or human companionship. But at times God must teach us that even these innocent, seemingly essential support systems must be withdrawn so that our dependence on Him will be total, as Jesus experienced in the wilderness of temptation.

Venden isn't wrong to imply that God's people during the time of trouble still need to grow. In fact, the above inspired statements are clear that this growth will be needed by all the saved at this time, not just the "last-minute" believers Venden talks about. But because they need further growth doesn't mean they are still sinning in any way. In fact, Ellen White is clear that growth in Christian perfection doesn't cease even when Jesus comes, but in fact continues throughout eternity.⁴⁹

It is important to note that Ellen White's reference to those who "have to learn in a few months"⁵⁰ what others have taken years to learn, is followed by this statement: "Those who would not receive the mark of the beast and his image when the decree goes forth, must have decision now to say, Nay, we will not regard the institution of the beast."⁵¹ In other words, those who learn what they must "in a few months" are still facing the choice between the seal of God and the mark

of the beast, which is before probation closes. Several pages later, Ellen White states with unmistakable clarity the preparation needed before probation's close:

"I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary during the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully."

"I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of 'refreshing' and the 'latter rain' to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! . . . Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. . . . I saw that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord."⁵²

In other words, total victory over every wrong word and action is essential in order to receive the latter rain and to be ready for the great time of trouble. When we put all the above statements together, it becomes clear that whatever growth and development remains necessary after probation's close is something beyond the removal of sin from the life.

Venden moves perilously toward the beliefs of the New Theology when he assures us that the reason sin won't continue in heaven is that "three problems that give us so much trouble, the world, the flesh, and the devil, will be gone forever when heaven comes" (p. 64). Apparently this is why he is confident that "those righteous dead who haven't finished growing up in Christ" as well as "those living who come in thirty minutes before probation closes" (p. 64) stand in no danger of reintroducing sin in Paradise. Again we assert our rejection of any view of divine providence which sees God taken by surprise either by death or the final close of probation. Inspiration is crystal clear that the God who is unwilling that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9) will guard the lives and souls of those for whom hope remains.⁵³ But Venden's idea that the absence of fleshly desires and worldly allurements in heaven together with our being "so enthralled by constant dependence upon a loving, visible God" (p. 64) will make sure sin won't re-emerge, is belied by the reality that sin first emerged in the perfect society of heaven where the world, the flesh, and the devil did not exist.

"Constant dependence upon a loving, visible God" had been heaven's experience for eons when sin finally marred God's universe. The New Theology belief that all God needs to do to make sure sin is eradicated from Christian lives is to abolish our sinful natures is contradicted by the fact that sin got started when no one had a sinful nature. Sin is a matter of the will. And unless it is demonstrated that even under the severest pressure our will blended with God's will can resist the slightest departure from purity, the danger of sin rising again remains. No wonder Ellen White declares, regarding what God will not do when Jesus comes:

"The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process, and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation."⁵⁴

Perhaps a word should be said about the issue of unknown sin. Venden confines his discussion of victory over sin to known sin only, stating:

"It is possible for people to overcome known sin even though they still have sinful natures and even though they may still have unknown sins in their lives" (p. 72).

He leaves unanswered the question of whether those after probation's close will still have unknown sin in their lives. But Inspiration is clear that the intercession of Christ in heaven deals with sins of ignorance:

"The minds of all who embrace this message are directed to the most holy place, where Jesus stands before the ark, making His final intercession for all those for whom mercy still lingers and for those who have ignorantly broken the law of God. This atonement is made for the righteous dead as well as for the righteous living. It includes all who died trusting in Christ, but who, not having received the light upon God's commandments, had sinned ignorantly in transgressing its precepts."⁵⁵

So the intercession of Christ for sin in the heavenly sanctuary includes intercession for ignorant sin. But at the close of probation Christ ceases to forgive sins; the saints now have spotless characters,⁵⁶ and are victorious "over every wrong word and action."⁵⁷ If ignorant sins require forgiveness, and if the close of Christ's intercession means forgiveness is no longer offered, we must conclude that sins of ignorance in the lives of God's people have all been revealed and overcome by the time probation ceases.

OTHER MATTERS

Venden spends little time in this book with issues involving the nature of sin and the nature of Christ. But a few comments will suffice in addressing the points he does make. At one point he writes:

"When we talk about overcoming known sin, we are not talking about being sinless. If a person were able to stop sinning today, he would still not be sinless because of his sinful nature" (p. 79).

But neither Scripture nor Ellen White teach the involuntary presence of sin on account of a sinful nature. The Bible declares:

"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1:14-15).

In Ellen White's words:

"There are thoughts and feelings suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men, but if they are not cherished, if they are repulsed as hateful, the soul is not contaminated with guilt, and no other is defiled by their influence."⁵⁸

Two of Venden's comments on the nature of Christ also merit a response. At one point he writes:

"Jesus never strove against sins. Please underscore that Jesus didn't have trouble wanting to do sins. If you'll research this carefully, you'll find out that sins (what we usually call sin), were disgusting to Jesus" (pp. 110-111).

If so, we might well ask why Jesus declared, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30). Why do we read elsewhere that "Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:3)? The implication is clear from these verses that for Christ to seek His own will or to please Himself would have been contrary to God's will, and therefore sin.

The following Ellen White statements are certainly hard to reconcile with Venden's insistence that "Jesus never strove against sins" (p. 110):

"There were those who tried to cast contempt upon Him because of His birth, and even in His childhood He had to meet their scornful looks and evil whisperings. If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example."⁵⁹

"Satan led the cruel mob in its abuse of the Saviour. It was his purpose to provoke Him to retaliation if possible, or to drive Him to perform a miracle to release Himself, and thus break up the plan of salvation. One stain upon His human life, one failure of His humanity to endure the terrible test, and the Lamb of God would have been an imperfect offering, and the redemption of man a failure."⁶⁰

One cannot read these statements and come away with the idea that it was no struggle at all for Jesus to avoid impatience and retaliation.

Elsewhere Venden raises the common though fallacious argument about the presumed impossibility of Christ being "tempted in all points like as we are" because of temptations of which His life experience knew nothing, such as television, wife-beating, etc. (p. 74). Such arguments are simply born of bad reasoning, if nothing else. Television obviously didn't exist in Jesus' time, but the Roman world offered plenty of comparable amusements and diversions, as any visitor to the ruins of Pompei can attest. Nazareth being the place it was (John 1:46), it isn't hard to imagine the variety of temptations available to Jesus during His youth and young adulthood. True, Jesus didn't have a wife, and thus couldn't have been tempted to spousal abuse, but again, numerous comparable irritations were present throughout His life to prompt Him to impatience and retaliation, as the above inspired statements make plain. Despite the advances of science and technology, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) are fundamentally the same in the age of the Internet as in the age of the horse and chariot.

Venden spends several pages responding to a recent Pacific Press book titled *Ten Who Left*, which contains testimonies from former Adventists detailing the reasons they left the church.⁶¹ If the testimonies in this book truly reflect the thoughts of those interviewed, the book should have been titled, *Ten Who Need Conversion*. Some of the experiences cited by the interviewees are so extreme as to lose any relevance to a serious discussion of growing up Adventist like one who speaks of a home where no fires were allowed in the fireplace on Sabbath,⁶² and another who describes an academy principal who went around reaching up girls' blouses to see if they were wearing bras!⁶³ As a born and bred Adventist myself, deeply immersed in the culture of the church's conservative wing, I can truly say I have never heard of anyone not using their fireplace on Sabbath especially in view of an Ellen White statement which places in context the Biblical command in this regard,⁶⁴ --nor can I imagine a school principal who stuck his hand inside girls' dresses as remotely typical of even the most eccentric SDA school administrators of which I confess to have known a few! Such comments reduce the value of the testimonies given almost to the level of frivolity. Without meaning to sound harsh, the credibility of church officials is not enhanced when such material is printed by an Adventist publishing house.

One could be forgiven for concluding that this book offers a convenient excuse for practically every dispute with Adventist theology or lifestyle standards to be printed on an Adventist press, all in the name of listening to former members. Is it mere coincidence that nearly every doctrinal, behavioral, and liturgical complaint voiced by liberal Adventists--from 1844 and Ellen White to jewelry, homosexuality, and women's ordination--just happened to find its way into this book? Frankly, I find myself bothered less by these ten who had the honesty to leave than by many others who hold identical beliefs but persist in living a lie by choosing to stay!

Venden claims to have read this book "in about one sitting" (p. 106). The following comment by him gives evidence that he probably should have taken a bit more time:

"As I read the book, my heart ached as I realized that too much of the time our primary emphasis is on roasting the Catholics, getting everybody keeping the Ten Commandments and going to church on Saturday, and getting them all baptized. Yet we wonder why we have two million former members and why so many of the dropouts feel that they were manipulated into joining the church" (p. 107).

But the fact is that every one of the former members interviewed for this book, according to their own testimony, were raised Seventh-day Adventists. Evangelistic techniques of one sort or another are not the issue here, since none of the former Adventists in question became Adventists through evangelism. Again we sense that Venden remains so immersed in the doctrinaire world of his evangelist-father and uncle that he can't seem to adjust to a church where the acquisition of doctrinal knowledge especially for the younger generations has long since ceased to be a priority.

Venden veers into an utterly strange concept, one totally contrary to clear inspired statements, with the following paragraph:

"But the interesting thing is that even those who might have been manipulated in, who never did come to Christ, who came only to the church and made a profession, are written in the book of life. Apparently those names are written down in heaven. God is so anxious to get

everyone in that He'll write down those who only profess to come.
Amazing! Really amazing!" (p. 109).

Amazing indeed! Where is the Biblical evidence for such a concept? Venden offers not a single Bible verse in support of this astounding claim.

The following Ellen White statements directly contradict Venden's view:

"Names are registered upon the church-books upon earth, but not in the book of life."⁶⁵

"You might be thought excellent in character. Your name may be registered on the church book, but it is not written in the Lamb's book of life,"⁶⁶

"Joining the church is one thing, and connecting with Christ is quite another. Not all the names registered in the church books are registered in the Lamb's book of life."⁶⁷

"Names may be registered in the church books upon earth, and yet not be recorded in the book of life above."⁶⁸

CONCLUSION: FANATICAL MODERATION

In one of the saddest, most destructive articles ever to appear in an Adventist publication, the wife of a college religion teacher details her pilgrimage away from our core beliefs--a testimony replete with doctrinal ambiguity, generational stereotypes, and emotional recollections.⁶⁹ In this tragic manifesto of the growth in one experience of modern Adventist liberalism, the author speaks of one who seems to have guided her pilgrimage early on. She writes of how she "listened with astonishment to a Week of Prayer by Morris Venden on righteousness by faith. Although I had always been sincere about religious life, I had never before found the pure grace of God offered to me."⁷⁰

We have seen, certainly in the book under discussion, that Venden's idea of "pure grace" is not the doctrine of grace taught by Inspiration. But none can discount the reality that the teachings of Morris Venden were the first step in the journey of many modern Adventists away from the Biblical faith and lifestyle witness of their church. Probably more than anyone else, Venden has driven a wedge in the Adventist mind between the Christian's walk with Christ and the more definitive, soul-piercing features of Seventh-day Adventist Christianity. Instead of viewing a personal relationship with Christ as the means of achieving faithfulness to Inspiration's doctrinal and moral benchmarks, Venden's teachings have spawned a trend in the church which views such a relationship as transcending the need for such faithfulness.

More so than the doctrine of original sin, the theoretical bottom line of the New Theology, the "relationship" theology of Morris Venden paved the way for the teachings of Desmond Ford.

Who was an early supporter of Morris Venden?? His name was Dale Ratzlaff,

who was removed from the ministry for denying the sanctuary doctrine. He has recently written a book attacking the seventh-day Sabbath⁷¹ and another which denounces the investigative judgment as a "cultic doctrine."⁷²

Venden may well lament these developments, much as Karl Marx would doubtless have lamented the distortion of his ideology by Lenin and his successors. But the trajectory of modern Adventist history offers clear evidence that it was Venden's teachings which took the first initiative in breaking and fertilizing the Adventist soil for the later seeds of evangelical and liberal theology. Venden's theology has facilitated the capacity of Adventists to assume the possibility of an encounter with God not contained or defined by the doctrinal and moral parameters of Scripture.

Years ago another religion teacher wrote in a college newspaper of how learning the difference between "knowing the right things" and "knowing the right Person" enabled scholars such as himself to question the relevance and truthfulness of various Adventist beliefs.⁷³ (While "knowing the right things" superficially will save no one, one cannot read such Scriptures as Hosea 4:6; Matt. 4:4; John 8:31; and 2 Thess. 2:13 and not conclude that the internalized knowledge of truth (see Duet. 30:14; Psalm 119:7; Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:8-10) is in fact what salvation is all about.)

In short, when the unscriptural distinction between relationship on the one hand and truth and obedience on the other was transmitted to Adventist minds, the tragedy of modern Adventism commenced.

Without Venden, I believe it can safely be said that the internal challenges to Adventism of both evangelical and liberal theology would not have been possible.

Yet unlike most contemporary Adventist thought leaders of a similar bent, Venden refuses to follow his own logic. He cannot acknowledge the natural antipathy between his extreme view of grace and the pillars of Adventist belief, nor will he submit his darling "relationship" paradigm to the scrutiny of the inspired consensus. He persists in the pursuit of fanatical moderation a middle ground between historic Adventism and the alternatives which is both contrived and irrational.

One denominational editor recently complained of "The Vanishing Middle" in the church's continuing dialogue over various issues.⁷⁴ To such I reply, Stay tuned. It will get worse.

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