

**CONCISE RESPONSE TO POPULAR IDEAS ABOUT DEALING WITH SIN**

**Table of Contents**

<b>1. "By faith alone."</b> .....	<b>3</b>
What the Bible teaches about faith and works .....	3
Ellen White defines "legal religion" .....	4
<b>2. The "fight of faith" and the "fight of sin."</b> .....	<b>4</b>
God empowers us to fight the devil; He does not fight the devil in our place .....	5
Those who claim that "we don't overcome the devil" is hard to reconcile with 1 John 2:13-14 .....	5
This is what they say regarding a similar verse James 4:7: .....	5
Submission and drawing nigh give us power to resist .....	6
Ellen White's writings explicitly contradict their view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation. ....	6
.....	6
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. ....	6
<b>3. God "does not need my help."</b> .....	<b>7</b>
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: ..	7
God doesn't need our help to witness either. ....	8
They deny emphatically that humans have any cooperative role with God in the battle with sin .....	8
Yet the Bible is just as emphatic that we are to be involved in this work.....	8
Ellen White writes, concerning this truth.....	8
They say our will and our willpower and our human effort ONLY has to go toward seeking Jesus in an ongoing relationship with Him day by day. ....	8
But Jesus stated quite clearly that seeking is not enough, that we must strive also .....	9
Ellen White comments as follows on this verse Luke 13:24 .....	9
And what is this work we must do, which involves more than seeking? .....	9
Elsewhere Ellen White again affirms that our part in salvation is the putting away of sin, through active cooperation with God's power .....	9
<b>4. "Sin" and "sins."</b> .....	<b>10</b>
They say He didn't struggle with sins, but He did struggle with Sin... trying to get Jesus to separate from His Father, which is the real issue in Sin". ....	10
But the Bible nowhere makes a distinction between "sins" and "Sin." .....	10
Revelation 3:5, is it a "relationship-centered interpretation" rather than a "behavior-centered interpretation" .....	10
This is a distinction of which the Bible knows nothing .....	10

5. "Not One Thread of Human Devising." What does that mean? .....	11
God gives all the directions and all the power.. But this power, as the above statement makes clear, remains ours to exercise. ....	11
6. Denial of Self-Examination. ....	12
But the Bible commands us: "Examine yourselves" 2 Corinthians 13:5 .....	12
Ellen White is likewise clear on the need for moral self-scrutiny by the Christian .....	12
7. Practical Confusion. Following are some statements that display this confusion .....	12
Dilemmas created by mere human ideas are quite unnecessary. ....	13
If God is assumed to do "all the work" of overcoming our sins, just what does this mean? .....	13
<b>Christ's Intercession: Never without an intercessor. Confusion and False Issues .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1. Living "on our own power." .....	13
What about the period after the close of probation?.....	13
2. Other Purposes for Mediation. Christ's mediation benefiting unfallen beings, as well as keeping us from falling.....	14
3. Last-Minute Christians. "What about the people who come to Christ thirty minutes before probation closes? .....	15
What about these "thirty minutes to deadline" Christians that they talk about? .....	15
The thief on the cross didn't have any time to grow .....	16
What does " their earthliness must be consumed" mean? .....	16
The New Theology 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". .....	18
Perhaps a word should be said about the issue of unknown sin.....	19
<b>Other Matters .....</b>	<b>19</b>
What about the involuntary presence of sin on account of a sinful nature?.....	19
Here are two popular statements on the nature of Christ which also merit a response.....	19
"Jesus never strove against sins"? .....	19
"He was not tempted in all points like as we are" .....	20
These modern writers use interviews with former Adventists who left the church.....	20
The Pacific Press fueled the flames by printing a book titled 'Ten Who Left',.....	21
God is so anxious to get everyone in that He'll write down those who only profess to come? .....	21
<b>Conclusion: Fanatical Modernism .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Teachings of these modern writers were the first step in the journey of many modern Adventists away from the Biblical faith and lifestyle witness of their church .....	22
The theoretical bottom line of the New Theology, the "relationship" theology paved the way for the teachings of Desmond Ford.....	22
Eventually, these writers reject the sanctuary message, the investigative judgment, etc. They may lament the fact that this has happened but their teachings as describe above brought it about. ....	23
<b>Some answers to more errors .....</b>	<b>24</b>
1. They say that this is false: "The main issue in sin is what you do." .....	24

The central issue in the crisis at the end of time is this: .....	24
2. They say that this is false: "We are not sinful until we sin." .....	25
3. They say that this is false, "If we stopped sinning, we would no longer be sinful" .....	25
<b>Here are several more erroneous statements which they believe to be true .....</b>	<b>25</b>
1. They teach that "Everyone is sinful whether they sin or not." .....	25
2. They teach that "God does not hold us responsible for being born sinful" .....	25
3. They teach that "We sin because we are sinful; we are not sinful because we sin." .....	26
4. They teach that "Sin is not what we do; it is what we are." .....	26
5. They believe that "Sins are what we do as a result of what we are." .....	26

### 1. "By faith alone."

The present day 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" 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; <sup>13</sup> But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

*Titus 3:5, <sup>5</sup> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

and that salvation is accomplished through man working out what God works in

*Phil. 2:12-13 <sup>12</sup> Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. <sup>13</sup> For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

*Col. 1:27-29 <sup>27</sup> To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:.*

**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 <sup>7</sup> And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

*Luke 10:25-28*<sup>25</sup> And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?<sup>26</sup> He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?<sup>27</sup> And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.<sup>28</sup> And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

*Rom. 2:6-10*<sup>6</sup> Who will render to every man according to his deeds:<sup>7</sup> To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:<sup>8</sup> But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,<sup>9</sup> Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ;<sup>10</sup> But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

*Romans 8:13*<sup>13</sup> For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

*Heb. 5:9*<sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

But the Bible is equally clear that this condition cannot be fulfilled in our lives apart from faith

*Heb. 11:6*<sup>6</sup> But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

*Rom. 14:23*<sup>23</sup> And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

After Jesus declared to the rich young ruler that commandment-keeping was the condition for receiving eternal life (Matt. 19:17 above), 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.**

**Ellen White defines "legal religion"** Over and over again, Ellen White defines "legal religion" as ritual religion, trying to fulfill God's law in our own strength. 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."**

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," involves direct confrontation with sin and Satan, which some claim the Christian must leave entirely to God.

### **God empowers us to fight the devil; He does not fight the devil in our place**

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 <sup>13</sup> Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup> And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God).

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 some to insist that "we don't overcome the devil", that "if I'm using all of my willpower in the faith relationship, I have no willpower left to fight sin or the devil", 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.

### **Those who claim that "we don't overcome the devil" is hard to reconcile with 1 John 2:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. <sup>14</sup> I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

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

<sup>4</sup> *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?).*

But nowhere does the Bible define man's faith-relationship with God the way some do 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.

### **This is what they say regarding a similar verse James 4:7:**

"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"

### **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

*<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup> And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

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 contradict their view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.**

Dennis Smith and others profess great respect for the writings of Ellen White. They speak of how both the investigative judgment and the Spirit of Prophecy are under attack in the church today. Yet they seem not to have considered the extent to which Ellen White's writings explicitly contradict their view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.

They see 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}*

### **3. God "does not need my help."**

Here is another statement of what they believe:

*"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" .*

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." {DA 535.3}*

### **God doesn't need our help to witness either..**

To insist 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 they all hold 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.

### **They deny emphatically that humans have any cooperative role with God in the battle with sin**

As we have seen, they deny emphatically that humans have any cooperative role with God in the battle with sin. Again we note some of their 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).*

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." 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}*

### **They say our will and our willpower and our human effort ONLY has to go toward seeking Jesus in an ongoing relationship with Him day by day.**

In the context of a statement we've quoted already, they try 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" .*

**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?

#### **4. "Sin" and "sins."**

**They say He didn't struggle with sins, but He did struggle with Sin... trying to get Jesus to separate from His Father, which is the real issue in Sin".**

Here is another effort to read into scripture something that isn't there. Hebrews 12:4 declares,

*"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."*

Here is what some modern writers say 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".*

**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).*

**Revelation 3:5, is it a "relationship-centered interpretation" rather than a "behavior-centered interpretation"**

Many writers spend a lot of time 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".

**This is a distinction of which the Bible knows nothing**

Once again, this is a distinction of which the Bible knows nothing. While they are correct in stating that the white raiment described in this verse refers to imparted rather than imputed righteousness, they seem 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".*

They correctly indicate 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). 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." What does that mean?

Some modern writers quote Ellen White's statement that the robe of Christ's righteousness "has in it not one thread of human devising" . {COL 311.3} They then say things like: "None of our work is mixed up in it at all. It is totally God's robe" .

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.

Ellen White's states that

*"by the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess". {COL 310.3}*

And how is this character formed?

*"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." {COL 331.1}*

**God gives all the directions and all the power.. But this power, as the above statement makes clear, remains ours to exercise.**

Her reference here to hereditary tendencies and unfavorable traits makes it impossible for anyone to explain this statement about "battles with self" as anything other than direct struggles with sin. **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**

*<sup>14</sup> But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.*

**But this power, as the above statement makes clear, remains ours to exercise.**

But they say, "It doesn't say 'have to' or 'must' possess in that statement by Ellen White. But elsewhere she 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." {HP 201.2}*

## 6. Denial of Self-Examination.

Any careful scrutiny of personal behavior seems an anathema to many modern writers. Here is what some are saying:

*"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".*

**But the Bible commands us: "Examine yourselves" 2 Corinthians 13:5**

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

<sup>18</sup> *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

**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? {ISM 89.1}*

*"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." {GW92 109.3}*

*"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." GW92 110.1*

## 7. Practical Confusion. Following are some statements that display this confusion

Error always creates needless dilemmas and blurred awareness of spiritual reality. Following are some statements that display this confusion:

*"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 would suggest that perhaps the true source of this person's confusion is the "other places," he is looking in addition to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, where he is getting his ideas about Christian living.

### **Dilemmas created by mere human ideas are quite unnecessary.**

How about getting answers from Inspiration and not from modern day writers?

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.

### **If God is assumed to do "all the work" of overcoming our sins, just what does this mean?**

The above statements illustrate 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?

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: Never without an intercessor. Confusion and False Issues**

Many of today's writers claim that Christians are "never without an intercessor" even after probation's close. These teachings are fraught with irrelevant statements, misperception of historic Adventist views, and the mingling of truth and error.

### **1. Living "on our own power."**

Many of these modern writers make the following statements about the historic Adventist belief that God's people, during the great time of trouble, will live without an intercessor:

#### **What about the period after the close of probation?**

*"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.*

*"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".*

*"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".*

*"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)".*

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". 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."*

Their 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," and have been totally vanquished in believers' lives. 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. Christ's mediation benefiting unfallen beings, as well as keeping us from falling**

Ellen White has statements which speak of Christ's mediation benefiting unfallen beings, as well as keeping us from falling. 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." {ISM 20.2}*

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." {FLB 129.2}*

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. 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 many writers' insinuations, 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. "What about the people who come to Christ thirty minutes before probation closes?"**

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. Some modern writers ask:

*"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".*

The implication is that this group will in fact continue to sin after probation closes. Without any Biblical support, they assume 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.'" {FLB 109.2}*

The "holy" described in Revelation 22:11, according to some, "are holy because they're overcomers, and they're not falling anymore". But the group called "righteous," are righteous like presumably the thief on the cross "because of Jesus' imputed righteousness". According to them, "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".

Notice that they are careful not to say explicitly that this "righteous" group are still sinning, but that is clearly what they imply. The implication is obvious: the "righteous" are still occasionally falling.

### **What about these "thirty minutes to deadline" Christians that they talk 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." {EW 67.2}*

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. They are creating a completely false issue.

### **The thief on the cross didn't have any time to grow**

They say, "The thief on the cross didn't have any time to grow". They need 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." "{CSA 38.5}(A Call to Stand Apart)*

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." {OHC 23.2}*

### **What does " their earthliness must be consumed" mean?**

In defense of their view that some Christians after probation's close will still fall and fail, they quote 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." {GC 621.1}*

Some modern writers take the position,

Page 16 of 26 Response to popular ideas about dealing with sin

*"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".*

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." {1SM 42.2}*

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." {DA 121.3}*

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." {MR926 36.2}*

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.

These modern writers aren'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. 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.**

It is important to note that Ellen White's reference to those who "have to learn in a few months" {EW 67.2} 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." {EW 67.2}*

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." {CET 113.1}(Christian Experience and Teachings)*

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.

**The New Theology 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".**

Apparently this is why they are 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" 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.

But the modernist 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" 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." {CCh 215.1}(Counsels for the Church)*

## Perhaps a word should be said about the issue of unknown sin.

These modern writers leave 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." {EW 254.1}*

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, and are victorious "over every wrong word and action." {CET 113.1}

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

### What about the involuntary presence of sin on account of a sinful nature?

These writers spend little time with issues involving the nature of sin and the nature of Christ. But a few comments will suffice in addressing the points they do make.

Here is one thing they teach:

*"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".*

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." {2MCP 432.2}(Mind Character & Personality)*

### Here are two popular statements on the nature of Christ which also merit a response.

#### "Jesus never strove against sins"?

*"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".*

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 their insistence that "Jesus never strove against sins":

*"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." {DA 88.2}*

*"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." {DA 734.4}*

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.

### **"He was not tempted in all points like as we are"**

Elsewhere these modern writers teach 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.

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.

### **These modern writers use interviews with former Adventists who left the church**



Many of these modern writers use interviews with former Adventists who left the church. They love to quote them to try and prove their point of legalism as being the problem in the church.

### **The Pacific Press fueled the flames by printing a book titled 'Ten Who Left',**

which contains testimonies from former Adventists detailing the reasons they left the church.

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, and another who describes an academy principal who went around reaching up girls' blouses to see if they were wearing bras!

I have been a Seventh-day Adventist for 31 years, and deeply immersed in the culture of the church's conservative wing, and 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, 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! I myself was a principal in a self-supporting academy.

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!

Here is what modern writer had to say about this book:

*"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".*

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 these modern writers 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.

### **God is so anxious to get everyone in that He'll write down those who only profess to come?**

One of those writers states 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!"*

Amazing indeed! Where is the Biblical evidence for such a concept? The following Ellen White statements directly contradict this view:

*"Names are registered upon the church-books upon earth, but not in the book of life." {MYP 383.3}*

*"You may 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," {ST, February 19, 1885 par. 10}*

*"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." {5T 278.2}*

*"Names may be registered in the church books upon earth, and yet not be recorded in the book of life above." {RH, March 11, 1880 par. 15}*

## **Conclusion: Fanatical Modernism**

**Teachings of these modern writers were the first step in the journey of many modern Adventists away from the Biblical faith and lifestyle witness of their church**

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.

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."*

We have seen that Venden's idea of "pure grace" and others is not the doctrine of grace taught by Inspiration. **But none can discount the reality that the teachings of these modern writers were the first step in the journey of many modern Adventists away from the Biblical faith and lifestyle witness of their church.**

Their writings have 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, their teachings have spawned a trend in the church which views such a relationship as transcending the need for such faithfulness.

**The theoretical bottom line of the New Theology, the "relationship" theology paved the way for the teachings of Desmond Ford**

More so than the doctrine of original sin, the theoretical bottom line of the New Theology, the "relationship" theology paved the way for the teachings of Desmond Ford. I believe the core problem with their anti-behavioral, legalist-obsessed approach to righteousness by faith, is their belief that legalism and "works" were Adventism's big problem, oblivious of Inspiration and mounting contrary evidence in the church.

**Eventually, these writers reject the sanctuary message, the investigative judgment, etc. They may lament the fact that this has happened but their teachings as describe above brought it about.**

These modern writers 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.

While "knowing the right things" superficially will save no one, one cannot read such Scriptures as

*Hosea 4:6<sup>6</sup> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

*Matt. 4:4;<sup>4</sup> But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

*John 8:31;<sup>31</sup> Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

*2 Thess. 2:13<sup>13</sup> But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

and not conclude that the internalized knowledge of truth

*Duet. 30:14;<sup>14</sup> But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.*

*Psalms 119:7;<sup>7</sup> I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*

*Jer. 31:31-33;<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:<sup>32</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:<sup>33</sup> But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*Heb. 8:8-10<sup>8</sup> For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:<sup>9</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.<sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after*

*those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*

is in fact what salvation is all about.

**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.**

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 the writings of these modernists, 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 many of these contemporary Adventist thought leaders refuse to follow their own logic. They cannot acknowledge the natural antipathy between their extreme view of grace and the pillars of Adventist belief, nor will they submit their darling "relationship" paradigm to the scrutiny of the inspired consensus. They persist in the pursuit of fanatical moderation a middle ground between historic Adventism and the alternatives which is both contrived and irrational.

Because others, including some in responsible positions, continue to seek similar illusions, many continue to hold an honored place on the contemporary Adventist revival circuit. But the march of time will witness more and more the holding of their views to the light of Inspiration. One denominational editor recently complained of "The Vanishing Middle" in the church's continuing dialogue over various issues. To such I reply, Stay tuned. It will get worse.

+++++

**Some answers to more errors**

**1. They say 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?

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. They say 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. They say that this is false, "If we stopped sinning, we would no longer be sinful"**

But they are 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 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 more erroneous statements which they believe to be true:**

### **1. They teach 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. They teach 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. They teach 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. They teach 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 contemporary view of sin.

### **5. They believe 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.