

## 2. Confidential! Top Secret Information!

The human mind is the battleground for the most deadly conflict ever fought on this planet. Christ seeks to control our minds so that we might reach the highest fulfillment of the capabilities that He, Himself, built into that marvelous organ. Satan, on the other hand, seeks to retain control of that mind which is “enmity against God.”

Romans 8:7

The human mind has been compared to a computer in which the memory bank is being programmed every waking moment by one of two sources: Christ or Satan. Like the computer, the mind’s function depends upon the information it receives. Having analyzed the information, the mind then determines its decision and subsequent course of action.

“Christ is the source of every right impulse.”<sup>1</sup> In opposition, “Satan is ever seeking to impress and control the mind, and none of us are safe except as we have a constant connection with God.”<sup>2</sup> “There are but two powers that control the minds of men—the power of God and the power of Satan.”<sup>3</sup> “Satan takes control of every mind that is not decidedly under the control of the Spirit of God.”<sup>4</sup>

In the clear, penetrating light of the foregoing statements, let us attempt to analyze how the two great powers of good and evil work. “Come now, and let us reason together . . .” Isaiah 1:18 is the basis of God’s plan of working with the human family. “God first requires the heart, the affections.”<sup>5</sup> (The mind and heart are used interchangeably in Scripture as well as in the writings of Ellen White.)

“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” Proverbs 23:26.

“The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed and always will fail. God’s plan with you is to begin at the seat of all difficulties, the

heart, and then from out of the heart will issue the principles of righteousness; the reformation will be outward as well as inward.”<sup>6</sup>

Often it is said about someone who is learning how to become a Christian, “All that he has left to do is give up this or that bad habit.” Possessions, attitudes or habits of life do not constitute the problem; they are only symptoms of the real problem. God says, “. . . man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23.

“As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart.”<sup>7</sup>

We can readily see that God’s method of accomplishing His goal for man is to begin with the heart or mind. Even this must be by our willing permission. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . .” Revelation 3:20. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” Isaiah 1:19. “. . . God will accept only willing service.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, He cannot accept obedience that is the result of obligation, force, to even the desire to satisfy a guilty conscience.

“The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a

burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.”<sup>9</sup>

Satan’s method of working began in heaven where he was successful in his effort to spread the rebellion that began in his own mind. “It was his policy to perplex with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah.”<sup>10</sup>

His plan worked so well that he has carried it out here on earth for nearly six thousand years.

“The enemy is a master worker, and if God’s people not constantly led by the Spirit of God, they will be snared and taken.

For thousands of years Satan has been experimenting upon the properties of the human mind, and he has learned to know it well. By his subtle workings in these last days, he is linking the human mind with his own, imbuing it with his thoughts; and he is doing this work in so deceptive a manner that those who accept his guidance know not that they are being led by him at his will. The great deceiver hopes so to confuse the minds of men and women, that none but his voice will be heard.”<sup>11</sup>

Satan’s work began in heaven by suggesting doubts, questions and thoughts in such a subtle way that the unfallen angels were not aware that they were being led by him. They uttered thought that originated with him, thinking they were their own.<sup>12</sup> Any plan that worked so well in heaven would surely work well on earth. We are witnesses to its success.

Now let us analyze these plans together. Both powers are seeking complete control of the mind to the exclusion of the other. God, by man's willing surrender to Him; Satan, by man's insistence on independence—a gift from the devil himself.

“The enemy is preparing for his last campaign against the church. He has so concealed himself from view that many can hardly believe that he exists, much less can they be convinced of his amazing activity and power. They have to a great extent forgotten his past record; and when he makes another advance move, they will not recognize him as their enemy, that old serpent, but they will consider him a friend, one who is doing a good work. Boasting of their independence they will, under his specious, bewitching influence, obey the worst impulses of the human heart and yet believe that God is leading them. Could their eyes be opened to distinguish their captain, they would see that they are not serving God, but the enemy of all righteousness. They would see that their boasted independence is one of the heaviest fetters Satan can rivet on unbalanced minds.”<sup>13</sup>

God says through Jesus Christ, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:36. Satan says, “Come on now, you don't need to be a slave to anyone.”

God, by open confrontation, uses reason. Satan, by keeping hidden, causes man to feel that he is doing his own thinking and making his own decisions when, in fact, the opposite is the case.

In this great contest there is one thing that Satan is exceedingly careful to keep hidden—his own weakness. It had been his plan to secure man's fall, and then he hoped that he and guilty man would somehow be forgiven and be accepted back into God's favor. God had planned otherwise. Since Satan and his angels had fallen by

open rebellion, but man had fallen through temptation, their guilt was not equal. Therefore, God directed that man alone would be given an opportunity to accept of the redeeming power of God's gift in His Son through the plan of salvation.

Satan soon learned that his plan made it necessary for Jesus, God's Son, to become a human being and pay the penalty for sin in man's place. The devil rejoiced in this fact. However, he did have a problem. How could he now hold man in his power? Herein lies Satan's best kept secret!

At the very highest level within the mind of man God placed His most precious gift to man—the will. “This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will.”<sup>14</sup> “Your will is the spring of all your actions.”<sup>15</sup> With such power in Satan's control, how easy it would be to bring man to destruction while deceiving him into thinking he had plenty of time to change as he desired.

Now, what about the carefully kept secret? “This will, that forms so important a factor in the character of man, was at the fall given into the control of Satan; and he has ever since been working in man to will and do of his own pleasure, but to the utter ruin and misery of man.”<sup>16</sup>

But why is this such an important secret? Because here is the method of Satan's control without his involvement even being recognized. This is exactly the same method he used in heaven. Satan knows that God will not remove this control from him, for God will never force our will. The Lord has just one plan—to win us back to Himself. Because of His gift in giving Jesus to mankind, God can say, “Yield yourself up to Me; give me that will; take it from the control of Satan, and I will take possession of it; then I can work in you to will and to do My good pleasure.”<sup>17</sup>

Man must remove his will from Satan's control before he can give it to Christ. Satan knows that he cannot retain or force man's will if man chooses to remove it from his control. “The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin.”<sup>18</sup>

As long as Christ has control, Satan is powerless. “Satan knows that he cannot overcome man unless he can control his will.”<sup>19</sup>

“The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can exercise his power upon us.”<sup>20</sup> Here lies his weakness. “Satan is well aware that the weakest soul who abides in Christ is more than a match for the hosts of darkness, and that, should he reveal himself openly, he would be met and resisted.”<sup>21</sup>

It must be understood that while we can remove our will from Satan, we have no power to keep it ourselves. It must be surrendered completely to Jesus. Only God alone can keep it safe from Satan’s deceptions. Unless our will is decidedly in Christ, Satan will take control again. “None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demon that had controlled the will.”<sup>22</sup>

There is one more fact that we must understand clearly in regard to how Satan and his demons control the will. “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.”<sup>23</sup> “All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain victory over them; for these are the avenues to the soul.”<sup>24</sup>

The five senses are the devil’s playground—taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smelling—all have one common denominator—each must be reduced to feelings before it can be used of Satan to fit into his plan. He uses our feelings in place of reason to guide the will. Perhaps we should ask ourselves how many decisions we make each day through feelings rather than through the use of reason.

As we take our will from Satan’s control and surrender it to Jesus, He purifies it and returns it to us linked with His own will. It is thus that He abides in us and we in Him. The result is that when doing His will, we are but doing our own.

This surrender must not be thought of as a trifling experience—something that can be done with little effort or thought. “It is through the will that sin retains its hold upon us. The surrender of the will is represented as plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand.”<sup>25</sup>

Let us suppose that a child of God is plagued with a sinful habit that he enjoys. He knows that he should give it up and at times even prays that God will take it from him. He may even be persuaded to surrender this evil habit to God. What he needs to know is that this condition is a symptom of an unsundered will. He is still desiring to direct his own life and is blind to the fact that when God controls the will we still do the choosing, but it is then our greatest desire to do His will and not our own. We need to understand that our natural desire to “do our own thing” is changed to a natural desire to do His will by the surrender process. We lose nothing except a desire to please self. We gain by living on a new plane where sin has lost its power and peace reigns in the soul.

When the will is in God’s control, the five senses are reduced to reason and conscience rather than feelings. We then live by faith in place of feelings. Living by faith does not do away with feelings but puts them in their proper place. They must follow the exercise of the will rather than to be the motivation for the action of the will.

Now you know the enemy’s top secret! If you have never thought to take your will from Satan’s control, why not do it right now? Just say audibly to Satan, “I am taking my will from your control and surrendering it to Jesus.” Then say to Jesus, “Please take my will for I cannot keep it.”

Jesus promises to take, purify, cleanse, and return that will to you linked with His own. “When you give up your own will, your own wisdom, and learn of Christ, you will find admittance into the kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup>

There is no power in heaven or earth that can force us to take this simple step. Let us keep in mind that it is the simple steps in God’s plan of salvation that Satan tries

to keep us from believing and implementing. His power over us can be broken with such a simple step as keeping our will surrendered to God every day. He knows that we hold the key in our hands. Will you take this step and use this key? It will open to you the power of heaven as you link yourself with God.

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## Notes

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- 1 Steps to Christ, p. 26.
- 2 Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 542.
- 3 Temperance, p. 276.
- 4 Testimonies to Ministers, p. 79.
- 5 Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 169.
- 6 Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 35.
- 7 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 97.
- 8 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 977.
- 9 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 97.
- 10 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 41.
- 11 Selected Messages, book 2, pp, 352-353.
- 12 Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 35-40.
- 13 Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 294.
- 14 Steps to Christ, p. 47.
- 15 Messages to Young People, p. 135
- 16 Messages to Young People, p. 154.
- 17 Messages to Young People, p. 154.
- 18 The Great Controversy, p. 510.
- 19 Temperance, p. 16.
- 20 The Desire of Ages, p. 125.
- 21 The Great Controversy, p. 530.
- 22 The Desire of Ages, p. 38.
- 23 The Acts of the Apostles, p. 518.
- 24 The Adventist Home, p. 401.
- 25 Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 61.
- 26 Selected Messages, book 1, p. 110

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