

The Mustard Seed Advent, 14-Oct-2012

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I Did It My Way

Dear Brethren,

We returned from another successful retreat to Mississauga this morning. Mississauga is 303 miles directly north from Pittsburgh across the border in Canada. It is a suburb of Toronto. We journeyed there and met with Bro. Jamie, Sis Janae, and Sis Sharon, Janae's mother. All seemed to appreciate the three studies, one Friday-evening and two on Sabbath. After the Sabbath study, brother Jamie and Sister Janae continued in communion with us. We were delighted to serve them in this capacity.

To accommodate this mission, Vinnette and I drove up to Mississauga on Friday, October 12th. We returned by leaving our hotel at 2:45 AM this morning, Sunday, October 14th. We left at such an odd hour because, to that point in time, I could not sleep. Had I continued to unsuccessfully struggle for sleep until the morning, I risked the dilemma of sleep finally befalling me as we traveled along the oft-hypnotizing highway—had we left at our scheduled time of 8:00 AM. Therefore, I arose and took a popular stimulant called *Five-hour Energy Drink* and then we headed home. This entire return-home experience becomes a useful, theological, teaching prop for the saints. It yielded a blessed move for we made the trip, usually a seven-hour drive, in 4:45 minutes. A normal departure at 8:00AM, experience has taught us, results in delays due to traffic and border crossing through the U.S. Custom Office. Instead, we experienced hardly any trucks or cars on the road for the full ride. We averaged 63 miles and arrived home at 7:30AM, and I was fully awake for the duration. Having reached home, I spent my day issuing this release.

As we, Vinnette and I, journeyed into the darkness, we were glad to receive a brief session of communication from our beloved Sister Rienzi whom Vinnette engaged in a texting conversation. Rienzi expressed concern about the use of the energy drink. We recognized her to be a carefully-studied source of wisdom on this topic and we pensively considered her counsel. She likewise, to meet the needs of her occupation, often travels long, early morning distances without the benefit of sleep the night before. She felt that coffee would be a safer option to keep me alert; she warned that my beverage could yield a heart attack. Contrary to this, we elected the energy drink because it was created to solve the very problem that I had. We have little to no personal experience with any other stimulants now on the market to cure the potential, irresistible demands for the mind to rest, a demand that would have occurred midway along the path home, and prudence required the avoidance of a weak substance should the loss of alertness afflict us in the middle of the passage. I needed to complete our mission home with confidence in the potency. My experience in driving in the early hours is that the mind desperately requires sleep after 1:00AM, and the impulse to do so can be automatic, involuntary, and irresistible. The choice that I elected, my way, now gives cause for us to praise God for, even though it may have risked my health, it worked very well as revealed already. All must take care to make the distinction, the differentiation: This was not a vacation trip; it was a shepherding mission, and "*the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*" —John 10:11. This is what Vinnette and I do, we deliver the Lord's "life", the *Testimony of Jesus*, to His flock. As did David with the lion and the bear, we do so without regard to hazard. My doctrinal thoughts that were expressed to Vinnette must be shared openly. There was another unrelated issue, a personal moment of reflection by me to Vinnette, that, though embarrassing, should likewise be exposed to the faithful.

Again, leaving in the wee hours of the morning was a blessed strategy. Vinnette and I rejoiced as we saw all of the 18-wheeler, semi-tractor trailers in sleep mode as we passed all of the rest stops. It was like the mythical night before Christmas—not a creature was stirring. We had an

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opportunity to praise the Lord in song and study. I know that the energy drink —containing among other things an overabundance of vitamins— is risky, and I do not recommend it as a customary, frequently-to-be-used solution to preclude sleeplessness. One of the results I noticed was that, on the way up, at a rest stop, I became peevishly annoyed with Vinnette as it seemed that she, at the cash register during a fuel stop, was moving very slowly. The Lord impressed upon me that it was not her but that it was me: My mind, due to the stimulant, was merely racing too fast. It was like I had stepped into another time dimension. In spite of this, my wisdom was in control: I did not violate any vehicular speeding regulations going either way, and I set my cruise control to match the law's requirements.

Regarding the health issues pertaining to the legal use of the stimulant, we —as men of discernment— have a perfect opportunity to deploy our faith and inculcate it into our walk. This we can do by being reminded of the counsel contained in *Ps 37*. It contains the theme of this moment in time for us, and I now find myself, with every teaching event, insisting that all engross themselves into the meat of that chapter. Remember how EGW is on record as isolating certain Bible chapters and insisting that the brethren make it a matter of first study, well the MSC seeks to relay the same appeal pertaining now to *Ps 37*. Let us all now understand that, having learned of Christ, we are commissioned to trust in Him. This is not to say that all scientific findings should be outrightly dismissed without sober consideration. Like theologians, all of whom have been exposed as untrustworthy and who cannot be consulted to win life, our trust is, in a similar vein, not to be sealed in science or men of renown, scientific reputation. Their long white coats cannot give to them overriding, incontrovertible credibility; their coats are not to be construed as halos, contrary to societal over estimation of their authority. If the risk is not certain and clear and corroborated by objectively-cited peril, and if the Bible cannot confirm the hazard to our health, then each individual who is on an active assignment for the Lord should measure for himself the warning hazards against the urgency-of-the benefit and then rest their trust in the Lord's hands. This is applicable with regard to most, if not all, medicines, whether natural or chemically engineered. Some would mistakenly assert that this is presumptuous, but such a sin is only chargeable to those who directly refuse righteousness, and parsing the difference (differentiation) is a matter of biblical jurisprudence. A scientific pronouncement, once cited to us, cannot become the genesis of our faith or our walk. It cannot be presumed that a violation of such admonitions would legally put us in jeopardy with the Lord. The ignorance of scientific findings does not lose for us His protection; it cannot, as the Lord measures our standing with Him, convert an unknown sin —removable by Jesus in this hour— into a premeditated or known sin that requires His recompensing punishment. In other words, because a worldly expert tells you of a thing, such is not an indication that you've been given heavenly-revealed counsel for which you will be required to give an account. Therefore, a failure to fear a science-articulated hazard —even if it comes from the more highly venerated naturopath— should not yield the inference of a presumptuous sin. All the more then should we reject the conclusion that a finding delivered by relay through a second-hand medium that recites a professional warning is enough to guide our steps —and step guidance is the buzz-word for today. Such a relay of information provides us with even a more nebulous foundation for our faithful action. Mustard seed Adventists must rest themselves in the assurance of Christ's care. This is exactly the point that ancient David's counsel of trust speaks to when he commanded us to "trust in the Lord". When this trust is achieved, then we will rest assured that we are judged by the Law, and any suggestion that a scientist can give us a warning that Christ did not cover in His law and/or with His lawyer is to suggest that He could not Himself communicate to this generation from His divine, Sinai-ic perch of the past.

David's prophecy of *Ps 37* is solid proof of this conclusion: He expresses that in this very day, 14-Oct-2012 —and not in any other time before the MSA— we should begin to trust Christ. He

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says the reason why we should trust in the Lord is because the wicked will soon be cut down: **“Fret not thyself because of evildoers...For they shall soon be cut down like the grass...Trust in the Lord...”** — Ps 37: 1-3. Before this message, none knew of the Lord; hence, it was of very little value; they could not trust Him. Never before has our conflict with “the wicked” resulted in their eternal demise, in them being cut down like the grass in the fashion described, even though David promised, by deployment of the operative adverb, “soon”, that such a day would arrive. I know that we often stumble in our faith because we discern that people, fallen men, cannot communicate to us hazards from a historical voice, but we must remember that the Lord’s mastery is in this tactic. If this we cannot believe, then we will have real reasons and strong temptations to violate our newly-cited, Davidic charge to trust Him. The texted message, received while we traveled, gives to us a real opportunity to assimilate this communal mandate. To my amazement, this is evidently a lesson which needs to be hammered home with much gusto. We must likewise settle in the lesson that Christ has given to us the assurance that, by the embrace of this light, our health is to be secured. He said, **“Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry...and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily...”** —Isa 58: 7, 8. It is now that we must trust in this promise; this is the very cord to which we must cling. Even my sleeplessness is managed by Christ! If the Lord, to assist me in driving alertness, did not want me to face this issue of a stimulant, then He would have given me the peaceful rest required for me, a 56-year-old servant, to make the journey home. My mission in Mississauga was completed, and there was no reason to tarry when the highways were open to me in total freedom. Imagine the opposite: Imagine if the Lord were to be so injudicious and remotely involved that He would afflict His own elect with a heart attack, and do so even after His servant traveled far to do His work. When has such ever occurred to His faithful under His OT leadership? Do we really know the Lord whom we claim to serve? If so, why should not we all heed the Davidic call to, **“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy WAY unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy JUDGMENT as the noonday”** — Ps 37: 4-6. When I took the stimulants to drive to and from my mission, 606 miles in 48 hours, I was orchestrating —not the scientific way, or the traditional path, or even the Ellen G. White, inspired counsel, but— I did it my very own WAY; it was my JUDGMENT! I was being a bona-fide, practicing Davidian. Since it did ignore some scientific counsel, and since it was not in violation to any Bible counsel, and since it heeded merely my wife’s counsel (the one who has studied, by the Lord’s prompting, my sleeping-driving proclivities) then, the travel plan was —without the shadow of any doubt— my very own righteousness. A thing which I was required to judiciously decide under the aegis of my own administration. I look forward to it being brought forth “as the light” just as David promised.

Let us take pause and think for a moment! Would the Lord, in the judgment, say, “you should have interrupted your studies and taken the advice of the scientists?” Which scientist has He validated? Which ones have released their findings with no hidden subterfuge, with no carelessness in intensity, or with no impure motives, with no egotistical drives? Which can be lauded with the righteousness of Christ to the degree that they leave no unturned stones in their research? Beyond that, if a hazard exists, one that a servant of the Lord commits though he is not aware of it and one that is not accompanied by divine injunction, then is he not now covered under the Sin Offering? To illustrate, if he were to board a plane with a faulty engine —such would be heaping upon himself an unknown hazard— would the Lord allow that plane to crash because His servant committed an unknown sin, an offense against his own well-being? What answer is provided for all who trust in

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the Lord? —“**Commit thy way unto the Lord...and he shall bring it to pass**” Here we see that our way, once committed to Christ, is promised success. Remember the example, taught in the past, of my *Jehovah Witness* friend. She used to reprimand me at work for living by the clearly expressed, historically integrated, *Lev-11*, dietary standard, the direct warning given by Christ for our health. Then as a juxtaposition to her faith, she, by trusting in the scientific findings, hypocritically insisted upon filtering all of her drinking water from the company, communal fountain merely because she heard reports that such water was a hazard to the health by virtue of presumed, invisible contaminants. Would not a God of jealousy be offended by her failure of faith in His word as she supplanted it with great faith in the findings of fallen, corrupt men, even scientists? Can they convey to this generation hazard better than Christ? Does not Christ offer protection to His own? Can we trust Him? Many questions such as these directly correlate with our closer communion with Christ. When our feet are washed, our way will be vindicated.

I know, EGW is said to have declared that we should not drink coffee. This is the reason why Adventists have been trained to, almost instinctively decry stimulants; our skepticism has grown out of that very censorious history. But, we must now ask, did this counsel equal that of Bible laws? If it did, then it too would have multiple variables that are in need of integration and differentiation attached to it like as do all of the Ten Commandments, as has been proven in past studies. Consider one such Commandment, the Sabbath Law: Remember, how Christ honored judicious modulations to that very Law? To boot, He practiced the Sabbath His way and not the way of the “experts”. Factoring this as an analytical tool, then we must now discern the answer to the following question: Did EGW have the ability to give to us all of the modulations to be associated with the corresponding variations to her rule of coffee abstinence? If not, then we would expect from her exactly what we are told that we have received: a blanketed, disintegrated command. This we have, until now, graciously received from the Comforter. Today is a new day, one in which the Lord can advance the standard with more exacting clarity. But, could she, in her day, relay forward to us counsel on driving the super highways —the first of which was only constructed in 1940, the Pennsylvania turnpike— with or without the keenness of alertness afforded to us by the use of legal stimulants to save our lives? Would she give counsel to all or make special exceptions to those who are constantly on the road and “differentiate” that counsel from those, like the MSA, who are not frequent in their long-distant driving requirements? Would she say, “Trust Jesus to drive your car should you drift into unconscious sleep”, or would she say “Drive your vehicle at the best of your human ability using necessary precautions, and, having done all that you can, do as David recommended “in the day that He may be found” and “fret not...” instead, “trust in the Lord” —not the scientist—for your safety”? EGW never had such a test because she ministered in a time before our contemporary, vehicular traffic. We know that she, being an inspired “milkologist” like Paul, was a partial prophetess: She could not choose the good and refuse the evil. As a result, since her death, we have unwittingly depended upon men, the discredited theologians, who have interpreted her counsel and fed to us their unreliable, measured conclusions, their second-hand relay to us of her words and her extenuated meanings. Some have installed those lessons as their faith. I wonder whom we can look to today for more expert inspiration!!? Could it be the light of Israel, the man whom Christ has sent? All must, by faith seek to grasp this lesson.

Another issue was raised that softened my heart. I was very proud of all three of the students who sat with Vinnette and I in study, but Brother Jamie’s comments, as we lingered after the last study, won my special attention. During my quiet drive home, his encouraging words yielded a special comment from me to Vinnette. Jamie, a 31-year-old champion of the Lord, one who has graduated in the Father’s arduous path to the Kingdom, one who, until a year ago, has advance in the Lord from a non-Adventist background, made my heart glad. The school of struggle and trials of a broken family life has won for him, even before uniting with the *mustard seed*, a love for the

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Lord. The MSC, once received by him, yielded an immediate embrace of this light. Having read much of the literature and sat in study, he was profuse in his honor and praises for this the Lord's servant. His tongue openly expressed the impulses of his heart, and he declared that this the Lord's servant has impressed him with much regard as he was reminded, by comparison, of the biblical characters, the patriarchs, that he has read about in the Bible. I was not embarrassed by his effusive praise, but we were both quick to give Father the glory and the recognition for His engineering and His power to draw a man to Christ. I could not help but to juxtapose his veneration with the low-level quality that has come from my own children. They too fall within the age range of both Jamie and his fiancée, Janae. They all have, from birth, been coddled in this light and inundated with this truth; yet, none seem to convey this same honor to their own dad. To my dismay, they seek wisdom elsewhere. Since this is the day when we openly express our reproaches, should I muffle this embarrassment? No, I must share it as a pain of my heart; like David, I cannot privately reserve this reproach only relaying it to Vinnette. I must publish our disgrace **"Because for (Christ's) sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face."** — Ps 69: 7. Vinnette has worried for years that the departure of our own children from this house would result in a blight against this work. Yet, we carefully and meticulously trained all four of them in all dimensions of life. Could there be any other experience of ours that has been part of the path of our proverbial feet greater than this, the raising of our children? Whether yes or no, this aspect of our "way" requires cleansing. It is an aspect of our very own nakedness. In this, all can better see the efficacy of the Ordinance of Humility: Our feet require washing, which is the process of validating our way by the Lord.

What is it that must be cleansed? We must expose this aspect of our history, indeed it has been already so done on many occasions, but now we must see the Lord's hand in this history. Then we can see how, even in matters so deeply painful, we must still trust Him. We cannot lament His guidance even in this episode of our joint life that, ostensibly, seems to be a failure. To do otherwise, to continue to mask this fretful frustration, would express a Davidic failure to trust in the Lord, a desire to hide the blemishes that we have received from the "judgments" that we have made and the "way", 'our righteousness', which we have journeyed. Instead of cowering at the thought that the church, the family, the friends and co-workers, have found occasion to mock and revile us, I point all to Isaiah. He gives to us the counsel that washes away our reproach, our seemingly dark failure. Vinnette and I trained our children our way; yet, it appears that it was not blessed of God. But Christ, through the prophet, Isaiah, disagrees as he, in prophecy years before even the first advent, manifests Christ's skill to speak to us today from yesterday's ancient podium. He points to this very hour of disdain when He declares that our judgment is not with our detractors but with the Lord. He said the following,

"¹Listen, O isles, unto me: and hearken, ye people, from far: The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. ²And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; ³and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. ⁴Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. ⁵And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength" — Isa 49: 1-5.

I thank the Lord that He has increased my/our family with the Mississauga group, and I thank Him for the love that He has given to me for them. I am proud that I can, by His power, elevate brother Jamie to be a son of God. But all should rejoice in the Lord's prophetic promise given in Isaiah for this house as well. I will be made glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my work will be vindicated,

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not by the praise of men, but by the judgment of the Lord. He has guided this house, and this I must declare even if our sight cannot now see the handiwork and the benefit of our arduous path. 25 years ago, the world, the church, and even the Bible did not commission us to forgo the institutions of the world and, instead, we educated our children on our own—such was our work, our strength, our judgment, our way—it was our righteousness. If it cannot be vindicated; if we seek to hide its results as presumed failures, then our trust in Christ must be called into question. We are all tempted to think of the Lord's operations to be conducted differently. We picture Him, after the fact, after we have taken bold steps which seemed correct to us even though they were controversial to the world, to reprimand us for not following the advice of the experts, in this case the educational professionals. We picture Him, instead of blessing our way, condemning us for not following the crowd and the scholars. Such is not the tactic of the Lord with regard to the church that He elected with Jacob: His pact with Jacob was that He would bless Jacob's steps; in fact, the church began with this very covenant at Bethel: “**¹²And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top if it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. ¹³And, behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord...²⁰And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me IN THIS WAY THAT I GO, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, ²¹So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God...²²I will surely give the tenth unto thee**” —Gen 28: 12-22, Jacob's way was blessed. Today, in the fruition of his blessing, our feet are to be washed, our way must now become ordained and acceptable to Christ. All MSA brethren must take to themselves this counsel.

The expression, “my way” may seem defensive and proud, but, to those who walk after the Spirit, it serves the opposite function, that of humiliation. Yet, it does not lead to heart attacks; instead, it makes us a new creature as we expose the full, dark highways of our lives, and then, having by faith begun to trust in the Lord, we expose, by the Lord's high beams of truth, our paths with the assurance that the Lord will vindicate us by leading us home. It is a step out of wickedness and into glory. This we do—not because we instinctively are righteous, but— because we recognize that, despite our reproaches and sins, He honored His commitment to faithfully lead Jacob home to Bethel, the house of God. We exclaim as did Jacob, a man who likewise was daunted by his travels. He said, as we are to soon exclaim, “**How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven**” —Gen 28: 17. The same feet which have traversed into sin, now step into the Lord's favor. Our way is transformed into His way even though others may find objection to it. “**Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it**” — Ps 37: 34. When we have our feet washed, regardless of the path that we have trodden, we elect the Lord's way. In other words, our way then becomes His way by the foot-christening fountain.

Sincerely,

Derek