COME TO THE MARRIAGE

If a person chooses to believe that making right choices gives him a sinless character, he has made a fatal choice. If right choices make a person sinless then man no longer needs Christ as his substitute after he perfects his choices.

Chapter 17

THE FATAL CHOICE

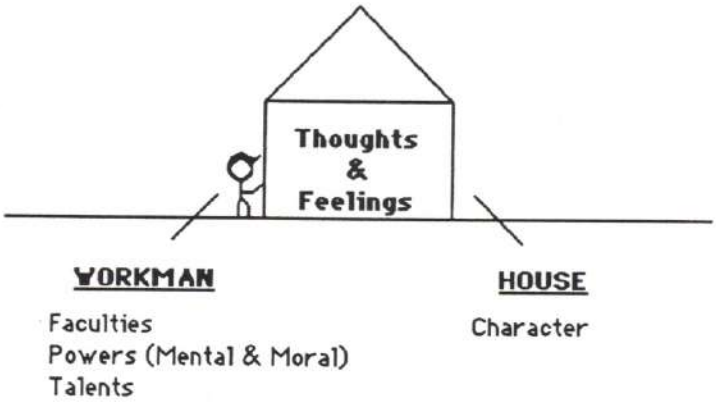
"Every faculty in man is a workman that is building for time and for eternity. Day by day the structure (character) is going up, although the possessor is not aware of it. It is a building which must stand either as a beacon of warning because of its deformity or as a structure which God and the angels will admire for its harmony with the divine Model. *The mental and moral powers which God has given us do not constitute character. They are talents, which we are to improve and which, if properly improved, will form a right character.* A man may have precious seed in his hand, but that seed is not an orchard. The seed must be planted before it can become a tree. *The mind is the garden; the character is the fruit.* God has given us our faculties to cultivate and develop. Our own course determines our character. In training these powers so that they shall harmonize and form a valuable character, we have a work which no one but ourselves can do." 4T 606 (emphasis and notes supplied)

Before we consider the above quotation let us review some definitions.

Faculty:	Ability to act or do.
Power	Ability to act; capacity for action. A faculty.

The words faculties and powers are used interchangeable. They are talents. Both of these terms have to do with the ability to act or do.

Let us illustrate the above paragraph:



The work that man must do is to develop the workman. This is a work that only man can do. The workman is our faculties, powers, or talents. These powers are not character, but they form the character. This workman is pictured as building the character.

Let us notice that the character is made up of thoughts and feelings. What does man do that builds the character and what does God do that man can't do? The part that man does is to put thoughts into his mind. He can choose what thoughts go into the memory. He uses his reason and judgment to determine what is truth. He chooses to read books that are uplifting or degrading. Man places thoughts into his head that give him the ability to do trades or professions. Man places thoughts in his mind that give him the power to get wealth. All men, good and bad, have thoughts. If character is made up of thoughts and feelings, man certainly has a lot to do with the character of the thoughts. The part that God plays, that man cannot do, is to change the desire. The thoughts and feelings combined make up the character.

But a person must remember that no matter how much work he puts into the garden, only God can make the seed grow. But it won't grow unless man does his work. The point we want to emphasize is that the mental and moral powers are not character. But they must be developed.

> **"The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men. . .and we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection. . ." COL 329, 330**

The danger today is in confusing the mental and moral powers with character. We must strive for a perfection of our mental and moral powers. Let us list the mental and moral powers. These powers are talents. By studying them we can see how easy it is to confuse them with character. These talents are also gifts from God and He supplies the power to develop them. But they are not character.

This list of talents is taken from COL 327-353.

TALENTS - MENTAL AND MORAL POWERS (Faculties)

I SPECIAL GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (COL 327,328)

A Word of Wisdom
B Word of Knowledge
C Faith
D Gift of Healing
E Working of Miracles
F Prophecy
G Discerning of Spirits
H Interpretation of Tongue

II OTHER TALENTS

A Mental Faculties (Ed 230 231)
Reason
Judgment

Memory - Knowledge
Power to discriminate between truth & error

B Speech
C Influence
D Time - life (MB 75 "Every moment of life is a gift of life")
E Physical powers - health
F Strength
trades
skills
professions
G Power to get Wealth
H Kindly affections
I Generous impulses
J Quick apprehension of spiritual things
K Social power (AH 457)
L Power of Self Control (CG 161)
M Power of Will (CG 161)
N Moral Powers of Faith, Hope, and Love (3T 187)

If a person has developed these mental and moral powers, he certainly could appear perfect. Two important moral powers are will power and power of self control. (GC 161) A person with strong will power could have correctness of choices or behavior. But will power is not character. Character is the desire God puts with our thoughts that makes habit patterns of thoughts that are unselfish. The ability to act (power) is will power. When a person naturally chooses to be selfish he is exercising his will power. Let us compare this concept with some other moral powers.

"The great moral powers of the soul are faith, hope, and love. . .It is through the exercise of faith, hope, and love that we come nearer and nearer to the standard of perfect holiness." 3T 187, 188

Faith, hope, and love are called moral powers. They are also elements of character.

"Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, and charity are the elements of the Christian character. These precious graces are the fruits of the Spirit. They are the Christian's crown and shield." CG 173

Faith, hope, and love are elements of character. They are also called the great moral powers. The moral powers are not character, but the ability to exercise the elements of character are powers. The acts a person does reveals his character, but they are not character. He can choose (will power) to perform acts of love (power). As he does this, he is thinking in a certain manner. Thus habits are formed that make up a habitual thought pattern. That pattern is character. The mental powers are the memory, the reason, and the power to discriminate between right and wrong. One can exercise his will power and put certain material into his memory. The power of reason and judgment must be exercised to determine truth. That process of action in using the mental power in arriving at truth is not character. But the beliefs (faith) combined with love would be an element of character.

For anything to be an element of character, it has to be a thought with feeling or a desire. The way man thinks is going to develop emotions of love or hate toward God or his fellow men. The mental powers are not character, but what he chooses to think about or believe will develop character. If man chooses to believe in purgatory, he will have a fear of God instead of a love of God. If his reason, judgment, or the ability to discriminate between right and wrong is poorly developed, he will put beliefs in his mind that will cause negative emotions. These thoughts plus feelings make up character. A mental picture of the human form is not sin until it is combined with a lustful desire. Memory is a faculty of the mind and is not character. The thoughts stored in the memory, when combined with desires, make character. A development of the powers does not change the desires. They may produce an outward correctness, but they cannot change the desire.

> **"Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.**
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> **"The Saviour said, 'Except a man be born from above,' unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John 3:3, margin. The idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature, is a fatal deception." SC 18, 19**

An individual must exercise his will power to perform good acts. But a lifetime of developing his will power so that he has apparent perfection of action does not give him a sinless character.

If a person chooses to believe that making right choices will give him a sinless character, he has made a fatal choice. This is so because without the final atonement, the blotting out of sin, his character cannot be sinless. The sanctuary service makes it clear that when a person sins, the character is blotted, and until the blots are removed, man will have a defective character. The pantheistic theories that we are warned about were theories that taught that men need only develop the power that is in him. Those were spiritualistic theories.

> **"His grace alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature. This power the spiritualistic theories concerning God make of no effect. If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness man has only to develop the power that is within him.**
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> **"These theories, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy. They do away with**

the necessity for the atonement and make man his own savior." 8T 291

The powers within a person are the talents. Our mental and moral powers must be developed, but this will not bring man to holiness. That concept does away with the atonement. Not until sins are blotted out in the final atonement will man be perfect in character. The old desires must be removed before he can truly keep the law with all the heart.

The sanctuary service shows why a person is sinful. He is sinful because of the record of sin in his mind and in the books of record. He cannot be righteous without a mediator during the time of trouble, without the final atonement. When a person does not understand the blotting out of sin, he does not completely see his sinfulness. When he does not see his sinfulness, he will not see his need of Christ.

A person must have a correct understanding of justification by faith in order to have the power of the Holy Spirit. He may believe that all his works are done with the help of the Spirit, but that is not necessarily the fact. Without a view of our sinfulness, the victories gained only minister to pride. Any theories that omit the final atonement and teach that man can be sinless by making right choices are spiritualistic theories. We need to carefully remember that the mental and moral powers are not character. Yet a development of the powers can give an outward correctness. A person can develop his talent of kindly affections. He can develop the moral powers of love, hope, faith. He can be a person who looks very religious. But remember, the moral powers are not character. Be on guard - do not accept theories that do away with the atonement. Come to the marriage.