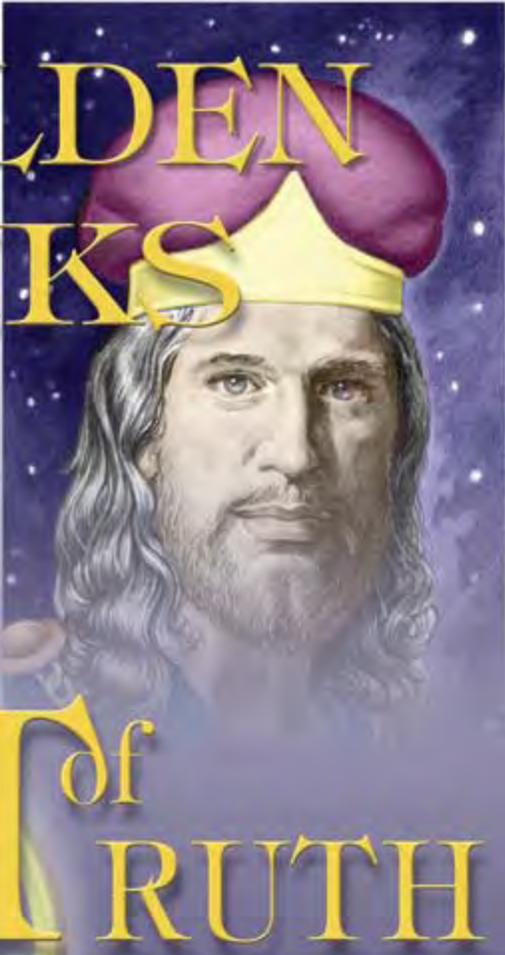


GOLDEN LINKS



T^{of} TRUTH

Vernon Sparks

Special studies
in the Human Nature
and Character of Christ and
its Reproduction in His Followers

Golden Links of Truth

Special Studies in
the Human Nature and Character
of Christ and Its Reproduction in
His Followers

by
Vernon Sparks

Contents

Introduction	4
The Nature and Character of Man—	
Chapter 1	
As God Created Him.....	8
Chapter 2	
As Deformed By Adam’s Sin.....	14
Chapter 3	
As Impacted By “The Lamb Slain From the Foundation of the World”	18
Chapter 4	
As Deformed By Continued Ancestral Sinning	28
Chapter 5	
As Received By the Natural-Born Man.....	36
Chapter 6	
As Impacted By Our Environment	40
Chapter 7	
As Taken By Christ	56
Chapter 8	
As Possessed By the Converted Man	74
Chapter 9	
Going For the Gold.....	88
Chapter 10	
Experiencing Character Perfection	100
Chapter 11	
Christ’s Human Nature and Character and the Final Generation.....	118



**The Nature And
Character of Man as
Deformed by Adam's Sin**

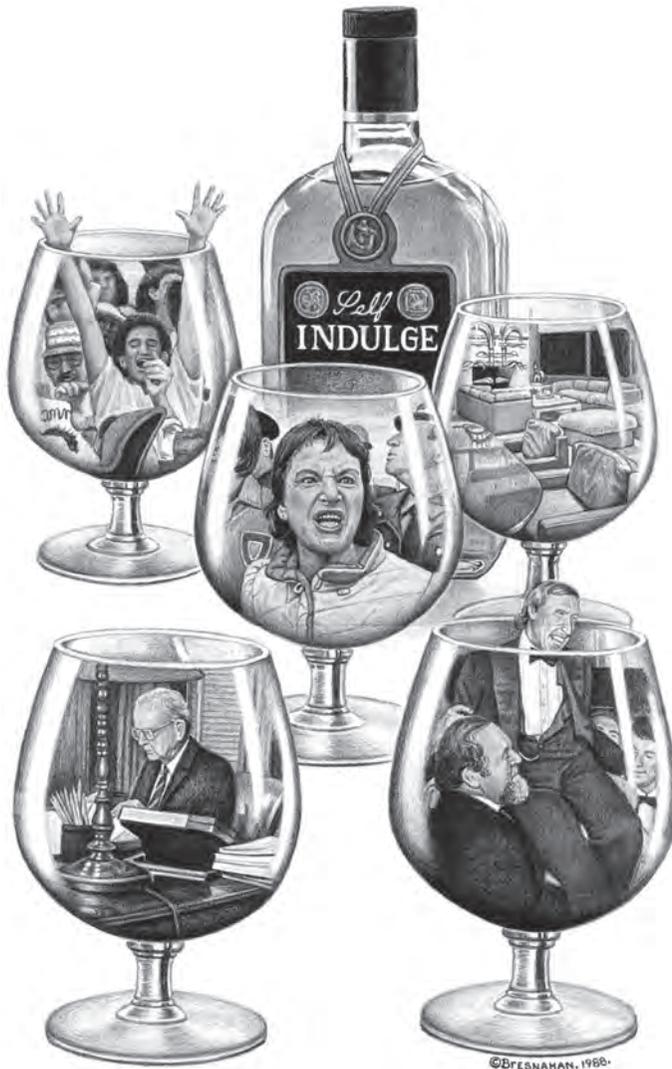
Chapter 2

AS we all know, Adam and Eve sinned by partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This sin was preceded, however, by cherished and accepted thoughts and feelings of doubt and disbelief. Their act of sin was the result of their first lacking faith in God's goodness and in His word and in the rejection of His authority.

"There was nothing poisonous in the fruit itself, and the sin was not merely in yielding to appetite. It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority, that made our first parents transgressors, and that brought into the world a knowledge of evil." *Education*, 25.

Adam's sin was not in the hand holding the forbidden fruit or in the mouth and throat chewing and then swallowing the prohibited morsels. The sin was not in the lower powers performing a wrong action. Adam's rebellion and sin was an act of the conscious will, first choosing to distrust, disbelieve, reject, and then to go contrary to the will of God. Even though all his tendencies, appetites, passions, and propensities were to obedience and his inherited, and up to that point, developed character traits were all sanctified, Adam exercised his higher powers contrary to their natural inclinations and chose to disobey. In accordance with the terms of his probation the impact of Adam's sin was catastrophic for him and also his future descendants.

At the moment of his rebellion Adam and the future human race lost all right to continued life. Because his posterity could receive from Adam only the tendencies and propensities which Adam chose to develop, the human race was unfit for continued existence. The inheritance solely from Adam could be only of a ruined character worthy only of condemnation to



The Nature and Character of Man as Deformed by Continued Ancestral Sinning

Chapter 4

AS we have already discussed, man consists of two groups of powers or faculties—the lower powers and the higher powers. The lower powers are made up of the physical aspects of man with our various appetites, tendencies, passions, tastes, propensities, and so on.

The higher powers are the functions of the frontal lobes of the brain and consist of the will, the conscience, and reason.

There is a third component of man which is a product of how the higher powers function—of how they relate to the lower powers and the world and universe around them. This product of the higher powers is called character or moral worth.

“The higher powers of the mind should be wholly consecrated to God. These control the man, these form his life and character.” *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 115–116.

Moral character consists of the thoughts and feelings. See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 310. It is manifested by words and actions.

“Angels are watching the development of character and weighing moral worth. All our words and acts are passing in review before God.” *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 242.

“Angels of God are weighing moral worth. They are watching the development of character in those now living, to see if their names can be retained in the book of life.” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 960.

Thoughts, feelings, words and actions facilitate their repetition. Nerve pathways used are biochemically and electrically facilitated to easier use in the future. These are referred to as behavioral habits or character traits and make up our moral worth.

We are not born with a moral blank page. Rather, we are born with the stamp of character of our ancestors. We receive the stamp of character of our ancestors, apparently, through the inheritance of tendencies and propensities in our “flesh.”

The good character traits are the fruits of the Spirit, for we may obtain them only through His transforming work in our life:

“Mothers, you are developing character. Your compassionate Redeemer is watching you in love and sympathy, ready to hear your prayers, and render you the assistance which you need in your lifework. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, and charity are the elements of the Christlike character. These precious graces are the fruits of the Spirit. They are the Christian’s crown and shield.” *Reflecting Christ*, 173.

The inherited evil, character-forming propensities of every child of Adam are “a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist.” *Education*, 29. They are the “inherent [unavoidable] propensities of disobedience” (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1128) that the posterity of Adam receive at birth. In other words, we are born with habits of disobedience already stamped upon our higher powers, our character, our spiritual nature, our moral worth. Our nerve pathways are biochemically facilitated or inclined at birth to disobedience just as though perhaps we ourselves had previously been disobedient. Whereas Adam began life with inbred tendencies of obedience from his Holy Father, we begin life with inbred tendencies of *disobedience* from our unholy fathers.

Because we are not naturally indwelt by the Holy Spirit from birth, at least some of our inherited evil as well as good propensities manifest themselves impulsively or reflexively, in varying degrees, in our *earliest* feelings, thoughts, and actions. From our earliest moments we begin reproducing, at least some of, the evil as well as the good character traits of our ancestors.

Thus before the age of accountability we, unless restrained by the Holy Spirit, involuntarily, unknowingly activate the evil propensities and tendencies inherited from our ancestors. We thus have reproduced in us without our consent the evil habits and character traits or diminished moral worth of our ancestors. Being naturally born separated from God and His Holy Spirit we unavoidably participate in the evil thoughts, feelings and actions of our ancestors.

Thus our fallen nature and corrupted character that is naturally formed at birth results in our automatic membership in the family of Satan. Thus we can understand the truthfulness of the following inspired statements:

because of personal, willful choices to participate in Adam's rebellion, is under the condemnation of God's broken law. Left to ourselves, we are a race most miserable and without hope. But, praise God, He has not left us in the darkness of despair.

The fallen human race has received a Great Light:

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Isaiah 9:2.

Isaiah describes "The mighty God," the Ruler of the Universe, becoming the Son of the fallen race:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6.

Inspiration says that prior to His incarnation, Christ was eternal—without beginning. Before His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus had been the Eternal Word. From eternity He had been a distinct person, one of the three "eternal heavenly dignitaries:"

"As a member of the human family He was mortal, but as a God He was the Fountain of Life to the world. He could, in His divine person, ever have withstood the advances of death, and refused to come under its dominion; but He voluntarily laid down His life, that in so doing He might give life and bring immortality to light. . . . What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination cannot take it in. The Eternal Word consented to be made flesh! God became man!" *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1887.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father." *Ibid.*, April 5, 1906.

"The eternal heavenly dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit—arming them [the disciples] with more than mortal energy, . . . would advance with them to the work and convince the world of sin." *Evangelism*, 616.

Nearly two thousand years ago the angel announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem that a Saviour had come:

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11.

Joseph was instructed to name the Son to be born to Mary

of the Holy Ghost, “Jesus,” for He was to save the fallen race not merely from the consequences of Adam’s and their other ancestors’ rebellion against God, but from their sins—their personal rebellion:

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21.

“Jesus came to this world to save His people from their sins. He will not save us in our sins, for He is not the minister of sin.” *Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1892.

We are told, and rightly so, that the humanity of Christ means everything to us, and that the study of His incarnation will be rewarding:

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. . . . And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 244.

One of the principle reasons for Divinity becoming man was to demonstrate that man could obey God’s law and thus to help show that the law and God Himself were holy, just, and good. But Christ came to demonstrate more than that sinless Adam could have kept God’s law. God became Jesus of Nazareth to prove that the fallen sons and daughters of fallen Adam could obey His law: contrary to Satan’s claim.

“Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver.” *Signs of the Times*, January 16, 1896.

Christ came “to show man that he can do the same work, meeting every specification of the requirements of God.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 211.

“Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. . . . Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience.” *The Desire of Ages*, 24.

The only way Christ could have proved Satan’s claim false, was for Him to take our fallen nature. We must conclude, therefore, that Christ had to take the same humanity against

are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.” *The Desire of Ages*, 25–26. Emphasis in the original.

Indeed, Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. We will next search to discover how Christ related to His fallen flesh in a way that enabled Him to live without sin, and thus become indeed our Example in all things.

Christ’s Higher Powers—With a New Heart

It is clear that Christ took our flesh—the lower corrupt powers of fallen humanity which of themselves cannot sin. See *Adventist Home*, 127 (quoted on pages 22 and 91 of this book). We are told that Christ took the “infirmities of degenerate humanity at a time when the race had been decreasing in physical strength, mental power, and in moral worth for a period of four thousand years.

“Adam had the advantage over Christ, in that when he was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing full vigor of body and mind. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of degradation.” *Signs of the Times*, December 3, 1902.

Obedying the great law of heredity, Christ’s flesh received from His mother, the inherent propensities of disobedience received by all the posterity of Adam. His nervous system received from Mary biochemically facilitated pathways, or “ruts,” or inclinations of disobedience. In other words, Christ’s human, lower nature or flesh was, at conception just like what all humanity receives at conception, with character-forming propensities of disobedience, a bent to evil, a power which *unaided* neither we nor He could resist.

“The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his

“Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1129.

In order for the character of God to be revealed in its fullness to the universe it was necessary for the Saviour Himself to be divine. In order to prove that God could deny self just as He requires His creatures to do, it was essential that Divinity be manifest in, or physically united with, the flesh. For the fallen humanity of Christ to be saved or kept from sinning it was necessary for it to be *spiritually* united with Divinity:

“In Christ, divinity and humanity were combined. Divinity was not degraded to humanity; Divinity held its place, but humanity by being united to Divinity, withstood the fiercest test of temptation in the wilderness.” *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890.

Though both divine and human, Christ overcame Satan in His human nature relying upon union with His Father for the enabling divine power:

“Christ’s overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. . . .

“The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience that is required of man. Man cannot overcome Satan’s temptations without divine power to combine with his instrumentality. So with Jesus Christ; He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God’s Holy Law, and in this way He is our Example. The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God’s power to help in every emergency.” *Our High Calling*, 48.

Adam had yielded to temptation in human nature. Christ overcame all temptation in human nature empowered by His Father. Christ did not vanquish Satan with His own divine nature or with His own divine power:

“When Christ bowed His head and died, He bore the pillars of Satan’s kingdom with Him to the earth. He vanquished

those who, by God's grace, do right are righteous:

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous.”
1 John 3:6-7.

The commission of one known sin separates us from God:

“Sanctification is a daily work. Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates the soul from God.” *The Sanctified Life*, 92.

We are justified by faith only if we, by enabling grace, are obedient:

“No one can believe with the heart unto righteousness, and obtain justification by faith, while continuing the practice of those things which the Word of God forbids, or while neglecting any known duty.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 396.

Thus we pass from life to death—when we backslide—when we willfully commit one known sin or we willfully neglect one known duty. However, God does not abandon us at that moment. He still loves us, and the moment that we confess and turn from our rebellion, we are restored to life.

In the perfection of character there should be constant progress:

“God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. The living God has given in His holy law a transcript of His character. The greatest Teacher the world has ever known is Jesus Christ. And what is the standard He has given for all who believe in Him to reach? ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ Matthew 5:48. As God is perfect in His high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere. The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character.” *In Heavenly Places*, 141.

Character perfection, holiness, and sanctification are progressive. They involve full surrender to all known light in every aspect of our life. We are not perfect, holy, or sanctified

of the character of God will be deepened; and with the whole plan of salvation clearly defined in your mind, you will be better able to fulfill your divine commission. From a sense of thorough conviction, you can then testify to men of the immutable character of the law manifested by the death of Christ on the cross, the malignant nature of sin, and the righteousness of God in justifying the believer in Jesus, on condition of his future obedience to the statutes of God's government in heaven and earth." *Review and Herald*, April 24, 1888.

When justification is obtained, it can be *retained* only through continual obedience:

"But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul." *Selected Messages*, book 1, 366.

We must accept Christ's image and mind if we are to accept His pardon:

"To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons, is *not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed* in the spirit of our mind. The Lord says, 'A new heart will I give unto thee.' The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul. The apostle says, 'But we have the mind of Christ' 1 Corinthians. 2:16." *Selected Messages*, book 3, 190.

The New Birth

To be able to benefit from Christ's death by the copying of His life we must be born again. Only as we are born again will our higher powers be able to discern the requirements of the life we must live if we would see the kingdom of God:

"Have you been born again? If you have not, then it is time for you to obtain the experience that Christ told one of the chief rulers that he must have. 'Ye must be born again,' He said. John 3:7. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Verse 3. That is, he cannot discern the requirements essential to having a part in that spiritual kingdom." *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 459.

We cannot escape the dominion of sin and the doom of eter-

through the fully obedient lives of His saints:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15.

“Christ was the special One who should bruise the head of the serpent; but the prophecy also includes all those who shall overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. . . . Those who truly unite with Christ will be found doing the same work that Christ did while on the earth—they will be found magnifying the law and making it honorable. . . . Whenever a soul takes a decided stand for truth, the head of the serpent is bruised by the seed of the woman. . . . When the advocates of truth reveal the efficiency of truth in their life and character, a blow is struck against the kingdom of Satan.” *Youth’s Instructor*, October 11, 1894.

The Vindication of God

The honor of God—the vindication of His character—is involved in the perfection of the characters of His people:

“Of the Spirit Jesus said, ‘He shall glorify Me.’ The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people.” *The Desire of Ages*, 671.

The obedience of His commandments by His people exalts God before the world:

“The blessings of God’s covenant are mutual. . . . God accepts those who will work for His name’s glory, to make His name a praise in a world of apostasy and idolatry. He will be exalted by His commandment-keeping people that He may make them ‘high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour.’ Deuteronomy 26:19.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, 118.

One of the major issues of the great controversy is Satan’s claim that God’s laws—a reflection of His character—cannot be obeyed or reflected in the lives of His creatures—specifically the sons and daughters of fallen Adam. Satan’s claims will be proved to the whole universe to be totally false as God’s remnant people reflect God’s character and His laws in their