**SERIES 02 (PREACHED IN 1900) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**03. THE ETHICS OF THE FAMILY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

THE FAMILY is God's first circle of society and it is the type of all that succeed. In the history of men recorded in the Book of God the progress is traced somewhat after this fashion: Individual life, the family, the tribe, the nation, the multitude that no man can number. (The church is not mentioned, for this dispensation is an interpolation, most blessed and wonderful, and yet it is a break in the stream of time, and just where everything ceased that it might come in the matter will be taken up again and carried on to perfection. G.C.M.) The family is the pattern of all social life in the purpose and economy of God. The tribe was a collection of families, the nation a collection of tribes. The family consisted of the head, the children, and the household. This was a pattern of the government of the tribe, and of the true nation, and of the human race in its true relationship, first to God and then the interrelationship of brotherhood.

Now the family has never been merged in the old dispensation or in the new, in the congregation or the church. The congregation of the children of Israel never did away with the family; the church is not intended to do away with the family. Each of these is but a collection of those; and, moreover, as the family life within the congregation and the church fails, the congregation and the church lose power.

What is the purpose of the family life? It is in the family that the individual is to be trained, developed, made strong; and therefore in the family there is not only training and the development of the individual, but there is the creation of the social conscience, and thus out of the family comes the strength of the nation and of the race. The strength or weakness of every nation lies in the sacredness or the failure of the family ideal. In the continent of Europe today we see the most startling illustration of this.

What is the ethics of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament concerning family life? We will consider the subject under three divisions: First, the marriage relation, which lies at the root of family life; second, the relation between parents and children that grows out of the other; and third, that superadded relationship, which is a very precious one if we once understand it rightly, the relation between master and servant in the household.

We begin with the subject of the marriage relation, and turn to the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark for a starting point. "There came unto Him Pharisees, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, male and female made He them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh: so that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

The occasion was one of those quibbles that men delighted to raise in the presence of the Master. His answer is characterized by His consummate wisdom. He went back beyond the Mosaic economy to the first divine intention. He was perpetually going back to root principles and facts.

Jesus Christ declares here that the divine intention is that of the marriage relationship. Undoubtedly, as He said upon another occasion, there are excellent reasons why certain people will never be married, but the first intention for human kind is shown from the fact that "male and female created He them." Both man and woman were required to give expression to the fact of the divine, and upon that supreme necessity of human nature is based the sacred marriage relationship out of which grows the family circle and all the other circles of human life. It is when we get back to where Jesus brings us to beginnings of things that we begin to understand the blasphemy of attempting to desecrate this holy relation, either by the fearful frivolity that has made young people imagine the whole subject is a joke, or by the more awful blasphemy that attempts to speak lightly of a relationship which has its origin in the necessity of man's revelation of God.

Jesus Christ marks the divine intention and clearly states the fact that the marriage relationship is only perfect when there is male and female, and re-states the truth of monogamy, the one man and one woman. Now what has the New Testament to say further about this relationship? 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." It would be a blessed thing if that little sentence were engraved in letters of gold and kept perpetually before the eyes of all Christian people. Half the present condition of worldliness in the church comes from the breaking of that commandment among those who have been born again. The marriage relationship is to be entered into only between those who are Christians. That marriage is contrary to the purpose of God and that marriage is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ which consists in the union of a believer with an unbeliever. There is a deep reason for this. The marriage relationship is to be based upon affinity, upon perfect oneness; and if that oneness is to be perfect and blessed, as God intended when He made woman, it must be the affinity of the whole being - spirit, soul, and body. A marriage relationship built upon any other affinity will not last; the misery and degradation of broken-up homes and desecrated love lie along the pathway of all such unions. All the laws of Christ are based upon the necessity of those for whom He legislates. The basis of marriage must therefore be what Joseph Cook spoke of as "a supreme affection between two." It is the affection of love in which spirit and mind and body are one; anything less than that is less than the ideal. Jesus Christ in the ethics of the New Testament has lifted this relationship into its true place and made it the highest of the high.

My sister, child of I beseech you to hear this word of your Lord the King, and do not run the risk of losing your spiritual power and your relationship with Christ by allowing your heart to centre its love upon any man who has not put the crown of his manhood upon the brow of your King and your Master. And, my brother, you before whom life is opening out full of brightness and power, as God meant that it should, do not desecrate that light of life that shines upon your way by setting your heart's affections upon any girl, however accomplished and beautiful, if she denies her Master the right to add grace to her beauty and the loveliness of heaven to the perfection of earth. A supreme affection between two Christian souls is the only true basis of marriage. If your life is surrendered to God what you have to do is to do your present work, and I believe that somewhere amid the thousands of the race God has found your affinity, and it is just as easy for God to bring you and the other together as it was for Him to give the first man his wife. There has never been a true marriage made yet upon the earth that was not first made in heaven. Given that much, what is to be the character of this union in the Christian economy?

"Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being Himself the Saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word." Ephesians 5:22-25.

Here we have two things: the wife is subject to the husband; the husband is the head of the wife. My brethren, that law has been most awfully abused. Subjection does not imply inferiority, and headship does not imply superiority. The levity with which this subject is often treated is excluded by the tremendous significance and sacredness of the symbols that the apostle uses to teach what this relationship means.

Now begin with the latter half, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church." How did He love the church? He poured Himself out in sacrifice for the church in order that it might be perfected and glorified; so the husband, if he fulfills the ethical idea of the New Testament, will love with the love that is ever giving himself for the perfecting of the grace and the beauty of the wife. Out of that love grows the subjection of the wife, the delightful submission of love to love. The difference between the headship and the subjection is discovered in the nature of man and woman, for woman, by God's creating touch, loves, and the sacrament of her loving is her submission and abandonment; man is able to love, and the symbol of his love is that he denies himself always in order that she may be perfected. That is New Testament ideal. Alas, that we desecrate it so perpetually!

Now out of that ideal will grow all the rest. Where in that conception of marriage is there room for divorce? It is our business to set our faces like flints against any law or any manner of life that tends to loosen the bond which makes man and woman one. Our Lord says that save for the one awful cause there is to be no disannulling of that divine relationship. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." I pray that the day may come when this country shall have no state laws about these things, but a national law, and when that national law will be for the strengthening of the bond. The most sacred thing after the soul's relationship to God is the marriage relation, and of the high ideal set forth we are to stand by the divine commandments which hedge it around and allow no manner of excuse to force us to break them.

What does the New Testament teach about the relation between parents and children? It teaches, first, that the duty of the parents is to maintain the children while they are children. "If a man provide not for his own household he is worse than an infidel." (1 Timothy 5:8). The days of the child's growth and training are to be free from the thought of having to provide. But the responsibility of the parent does not end with the maintenance of the child; the more important and the far more often neglected responsibility is that of the development of the character of the child. Ephesians 6:4, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." The first duty of the parents to the child is negative - not to provoke them to wrath. Obey that and no other negative word need be said. But now comes the positive, "Nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." There is no more profitable investment that man or woman can make than the time and the care and the love they bestow upon the creation of the Christly character in the children that God has entrusted to their care. The Old Testament word is repeated here in new form. Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." "In the way he should go." I think that the truer translation would "Train up a child in his way." Does that mean to let the child have his own way? Yes, and no. We are not to let the child's will run riot, but I think what the Spirit of God meant when He inspired the words is this: every child has his own fitness, his own possibility; discover it, train it; that is the work of a parent. We take all the children of a district and let some schoolmaster teach them, and we imagine that we can, by this sort of mechanical process, train every one of them. Of course there are things which the schoolmaster must do for the child, but the training of the child in its special way, on right lines of development, is the work of the parent. Within the compass of the word there is discipline, but there is more than discipline. Alas, that so many fathers think that their only relation to the child is that of providing food and playing the moral policeman!

"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." It does not mention mothers. There are no mistakes in this Book. My proof of the divinity of the Book is the Book and the tremendous fitness of a message written here years ago to the actual need of this hour. There is little need to say to Christian mothers, "Provoke not your children to wrath;" but there is need to say it to fathers, and there is need to say to fathers still, "Nurture your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord." The ethics of Christianity lays upon fathers the burden of training their bairns, whether they are business men or professional men. A deacon in my church said to me one day, "I haven't seen Willie and Ethel awake for three months except on Sunday." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well," said he, "I am so fearfully busy that I turn out early in the morning before they are up, and when I come home at night they have gone to bed." I said, "If you cannot get hold of your children more than that you would better give up some portion of your business or your church work." "What do you mean?" he said. "Mean! you are going to lose that boy and girl. Someone else may win them, but they won't be your children in the dual sense, by the flesh and by the Spirit, if you don't put more time in and train them yourself." He did it, and from that day has made it a solemn duty to have at least an hour with his children every day.

"Fathers, nurture your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord." To transfer that responsibility is to work a double harm. It is to harm your children and it is to harm you. All God's economy for man is so absolutely perfect that if you interfere with the smallest part of it you fling the whole machinery out of gear. God's will for you, father, is that you should train your boy. When you say that you have not time you are not only wronging your boy but yourself. When God says that you are to train your boy He also means that the boy will train you. In your patient dealing with the wrong in him, and your patient and loving development of the right in him, your own wrong is being dealt with and your own right is being strengthened. I plead with you, Christian men and women, to get back to your children, get hold of them, train them. What do you know about your boy? What books is he reading? You don't know! Then God have mercy upon you; go and find out. What games are your boys playing? "I really don't know." Then find out. When did you play with them last? "I don't do that." Then you ought. One thing that pulls me over the sea is three boys, who are waiting for me as I am waiting for them, and the first thing I shall do with them will not be to pray with them, but to play with them - grip them to my heart, if God will, help them by being a boy with them. Fathers, train your children; learn to know what they are doing, what they are thinking, what they are playing; put the best of your consecrated life into the making of those boys and girls into men and women after the heart of Christ.

Then, of course, there is the other side. There is the relation of the child to the parent.

Ephesians 6:1,2: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."

Here are two things, obey and honor. In the old commandment. "Honor thy father and mother," the word "honor" includes both, but in the New Testament the two things are separated.

Obey. You parents do no kindness to your children when you do not insist - gently, firmly, sweetly, but strongly upon obedience. Why does God say that the child is to obey? I long to get your minds away from the idea that is harsh and capricious. Obedience means that the child shall have no care, no need to plan and arrange, that another shall plan for it, another arrange for it, and it shall be free to play and laugh its way into the conflict. There is no more gracious provision in the Book than obedience. Don't let your boy be worried about making plans; do it for him and let him be free from care. Oh, sometimes today I feel, if only my father and mother could decide for me! Oh, for someone else to tell me what to do! God says, Let the children have someone to decide for them, and you see to it they obey, because in obedience is freedom. God's one thought of the boy and girl is that they should play. What is the most wonderful picture of the coming glory in the whole of the old prophets? This, "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing." That is the divine ideal - that your child may be free to play its way into work, to laugh its way into the fight. You think for it, and plan for it, and insist that it obeys you, in order that it may not have worry, care, anxiety. But there is a moment when your child must cease to obey. There comes a time when in the very necessity of the development of the child nature it must say, Now I must decide alone.

But there is never a moment when a child is to cease to honor father and mother. My father and mother loved me and cared for me long before I had a thought for myself, and it is mine to fling the light of my love around their last days and heap the honors of my manhood upon their head. You never get away from the duty of honoring your parents. You remember how Jesus dealt with those who said, when they ought to have been paying money to support father and mother: "We really cannot; it is corban (a gift). We have put it in the treasury of God." He taught them that such gifts were insults to God. The man who is devoting money to the work of God and neglecting father and mother is insulting God by his gift. The first business of the child is to honor the parent. At the cross, when the darkness deepens around the blessed One, He thinks of His mother and finds her a home. The ethics of Jesus is backed by His example.

A word about the other circle in the home, masters and servants. In the Christian household there are no slaves. Remember what Paul says in Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free." There is the servant and the master. But what is the master? In Colossians the apostle says the master is to remember in his relationship to his servant that he also has a Master, Jesus. Your relation of master to servant is to be of the same nature as your Master Jesus's relationship to you. How can that be? Direction in the duties of the day and service rendered on your behalf to your servant. Do not forget that your servant in this Christian dispensation is not a chattel that you can barter. If a human being crosses your threshold to minister to your necessities you are responsible in a measure for the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of your servant while she or he dwells under your roof. Your mastership of your servant is to be on the pattern of the Master's mastership of you.

What about the servant? Obedience is to be rendered, says the apostle in Ephesians 6:5-8. First, obedience is to be rendered cheerfully and gladly as to Christ. Over all the routine of domestic service the light of the New Testament emblazons the legend, "For Christ, unto Christ."

Then there is that word to servants, "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." There is no place where you can more wonderfully adorn the doctrine than in the menial drudgery of the common hours and the commonplaces. Peter, speaking to household servants, tells them that they are to obey cheerfully, not merely the good and the gentle, but the froward and the awkward. How does he help them to do it? He says, If you suffer wrongly you are in comradeship with Jesus. How beautifully the life of the servant is lit in the home of the Christian and in the light of this New Testament!

May God guard the family, and the responsibility of guarding it lies upon us who are Christians. To young men and women I say, first, honor your parents, and second, let God choose for you when you are entering upon the marriage relationship. What shall I say to parents? What is your home life? Do you fulfill these ideals? How do you expect that your children are going to be lovely and beautiful if you are contradicting love before them? Oh, let our homes be the abode of love at all costs! In proportion as we create these homes we are serving our day and generation by the will of God. May God help us to be families over which the great All-Father presides, and where His love is reflected in our love.