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

**05. THE ETHICS OF POLITICS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

MANY VALUED Christian teachers believe that there is no place in politics for the Christian, and no room in Christian life for political matters. I utterly differ from that view and believe that here, as everywhere else, a very definite responsibility rests upon all Christian people.

First of all, I accept Webster's definition of the word. "Politics is the department of ethics which has to do with the regulation and government of a nation and state." It is utterly inconceivable to me that the Christian is to have an influence and responsibility in all phases of human life except this. I cannot believe that Jesus Christ would teach His people concerning trade relationships, and home relationships, and individual life, and yet in the larger subject of the condition of peoples and of governments, He should have no message whatever. I think that there have been two great mistakes made by Christian people. The first has been that of abstention, and the second that of absorption. Some Christians have abstained altogether from touching the question of the state and its government in which they live, and in which they enjoy the privileges that that government brings; while others have made the mistake of allowing their Christianity to be absorbed in their politics until it has become not so difficult to find the politics of the church member, as it has become to find his Christianity. Both those classes I believe to have been wrong. Let us look then at the teaching of the Scriptures as to our responsibility and privilege. Begin with the teaching of Christ. First, He declares a great principle, and second, He left with His people a great commission.

The declaration of principle is to be found in Mark 12:13: "And they sent unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the that they might catch Him in His talk. And they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest not for any one; for Thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

Mark the subtlety of their question. Here is the coalition of two opposite political parties, and the point of their difference was the very subject upon which they questioned the Lord. The Pharisees said that the Hebrews ought not to pay taxes, and the Herodians said that they ought. It appears as though Jesus must give a simple yes or no to this question. If he say yes, then he will antagonize the Pharisees; if He say no, He will antagonize the Herodians. Moreover, if He say yes, then He will lose popularity with the crowd, because they are hoping that He is going to break the yoke of the oppressor and set them free. If, on the other hand, He say no, then these men will have something upon which they may report Him to Rome as a preacher of sedition. But the subtlety of it only makes a background to the majesty of His dealing with their hypocrisy. When He heard their question and marked their hypocrisy, what did He say? "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." But He said that with an illustration full of point and of power. Looking at this group of men, He said, "Show me a penny;" and they showed Him a penny. In that penny lay their own answer. He pointed at it and said, "Whose image and superscription is that?" They said, "Caesar's." By that confession, and by the fact that they produced the Roman penny, they showed that they were deriving certain advantages from the government of Caesar. They were trading with Caesar's coins. They may have lost something, but they were gaining something. Now, says the Master: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. If you trade with the coinage of Caesar, pay tribute to Caesar; but remember that while you do that, there is a higher law which is to condition the lower, and the higher law is this, that you render to God the things that are God's."

Notice what we have here. The Master's answer reveals His own position and the position of all those who hear His words and follow in His steps. What is His position? This: He is captured and held by neither political party in the state, but He definitely dictates the principles of righteousness to both parties. He is held by neither party because He Himself is acting upon principle; His people are not to be held by a party merely, because they too are to act, not upon rules and regulations, but upon principles. What is the principle upon which the Lord answers the question? This: that every man who shares in the privileges of government is responsible to respond to that government by paying tribute and obeying its laws, and contributing to the welfare of the state, but he is also to remember that his relation to the state is overruled by and conditioned in the higher relation which he bears to God. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." The Lord here declared a principle, and all principles are abiding in the economy of God.

Now look at another statement of our Lord. He has finished His work; He has been to the cross; He has been into the grave; He has risen again from among the dead, and is sojourning a little while with a company of the disciples before ascending on high and pouring out upon them the Holy Spirit. During that period of His sojourn amongst them He lays upon them the great commission; He puts in order all the work they have to do.

Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and disciple the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."

Mark 16:15,16: "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

Those commissions are not identical, they were not spoken upon the same occasion, and they do not give the church the same charter. In Matthew we have this command, "Teach, disciple the nations, exert your influence upon the nations." This is not the individual gathering out of the church. Matthew presents the picture of the King and the kingdom which is to influence the nations. The nations are principally in view here, and we get a glimpse of the church only through the nation. In Mark we have quite another commission, the commission on which our missionaries are serving today, the commission of preaching the gospel to the whole creation, and the man that hears the gospel and is baptized with the Holy Ghost is saved. Does that do away with the water baptism? Certainly not. The baptism of the believer is to be the sign of his baptism by the Holy Ghost. The truth revealed in Matthew is this: That the church is to be the holy nation, exerting its influences upon other nations, discipling the nations, preparing nations for the day and hour that must come when the Lord shall come to His kingdom and shall set up His reign upon the earth.

This commission in Matthew reveals a political responsibility. The church is the holy nation, and is to live and work among the nations; not separated as the Hebrew nation was, but scattered over the whole earth, mixing among all the other nations, and influencing those in the midst of which she lives and works.

Take that national thought and apply it to the individual. Every member of the church is a citizen of the heavenly city that is yet to come, but is to exert in the earthly city the influence and the power of the heavenly. Someone has written asking me, if we are to be interested in the affairs of the nation and city in which we live, how do we reconcile that with the statement in Hebrews that we seek a city, here we have no continuing one? In this way: When I quote that text I do not point upward. That is to say, the city of God has never yet been built, and our business is to seek to realize it, by so much as we may, here and now. Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees, why? Because he saw the city of God along the vista, the shadowy distance of the years, and his whole life was a life of loyalty to that city. But how was he to exert it? In an attempt to realize its principles wherever he came. If you think that God picked out Abraham and the Hebrew nation in order that He might have a pet, you have never read your Bible aright. "I will bless thee and make thee a blessing." God loved the Gentiles as much as the Jews, and it was because he loved the nations that He made a nation, and this one nation was to affect all the nations; but that miserably failed on the human side.

Today we have the same thought in the heart of God. He still has in the world citizens of the city that He is building, and how are they to seek it? Just as they are to seek God's kingdom. "Seek ye first the kingdom." Surely none but the most selfish and arrogant will point upward when they say that. Jesus meant that we are to seek it here and now; seek it wherever your life has a touch of influence. There lies the responsibility of the Christian in the realm of the nation in which that Christian forms a part while he or she is still here in the world. What do we send missionaries out to do? To win men for God. Certainly. But in winning those men for God, is the missionary winning merely the soul of the men? He wins that first, but does he do nothing else? What has been the story of foreign missionary work, but the story of changing the laws of people, altering their habits, touching them in their homes and in their dress and in government - everywhere? Nobody quarrels with that when the foreign missionary question is up. But if you are going to change the unholy laws and customs of people that dwell in darkness, why neglect the unholy laws and customs of your own country? The principle is identical; it underlies both questions. The holy nation is scattered through all the nations in the economy of God in order that the nation may disciple the nations, influence them wherever they have a chance.

Someone says: But I thought you held that the world could not be won until the Master came. So I do; but I have not lost sight of the fact that the Spirit of God is getting ready for the coming of the Master, not merely by gathering out a church, but also by preparing the nations of the earth. The perfect government will never come until He comes; the world will never be won in the way in which some of us thought so long it would be won; but when He comes He will find throughout all the nations a preparatory work that has been done by the Spirit and the church larger than has ever been tabulated within the records of the churches; and it is to that work that we are committed as well as to the work of gathering in individual souls to Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God has a double work in the world today: one work in the church, and another larger work outside the church. Upon the day of Pentecost that was fulfilled which was spoken by Joel: the Spirit was poured out, not merely upon the church, but upon all flesh. He came to dwell in the believing disciples, but came upon all flesh. What was His work upon all flesh? "He shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment" - not to come, remember, but of judgment past, accomplished on the cross. From that moment to this the Spirit has been doing those two things. And it is not merely an individual conviction of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, but a race conviction, so that at the close of this nineteenth century the world at large has a new sense of sin and a new idea of righteousness and a new dawning conception of what judgment really means.

Man is very slow in understanding the things of God; but the Spirit has been doing that work, and He does it in cooperation with the church. Every individual believer, therefore, is responsible to exert the influence of one life in cooperation with the Spirit, first to win men to Jesus Christ, but also to influence the nations in preparing for the coming of the King Himself. We too often lose sight of that larger outlook upon spiritual work and church work.

Now let us go a step farther and ask, "What is to be the position of the believer in the world in the light of these facts?"

Romans 13 :1: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God." Well, you say, I can't understand that.

Neither can I, but I believe it. I cannot understand it as I look around me today, or as I try to trace the probable outcome of the diplomacy and duplicity of the nations, but I can see something of it as I look back. I can understand that even Cyrus was girded by God to do his work, and that one illuminative point in divine method makes my heart be still in the midst of so much that is mysterious today. "The powers that be are ordained of God." Oh, the comfort of it! Browning sang truly, "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world."

"The powers that be are ordained of God, therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God; and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil ... Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience's sake. For, for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

The chapter is full of suggestive teaching, but we will only gather up one or two principles that lie underneath it. First, government is of God. Anarchy is of the very essence of hell. Lucifer fell from the brightness of his position in the hierarchy of heaven because he desired anarchy. He refused government, and all anarchy is the outcome of that same spirit. Government is order; government is of God.

Government is ordained of God to be a terror to evil doers, and for the reward of the good. This is a mystery that cannot be explained in every little detail, but may be explained if you take great principles. Government is of God, therefore obedience to government is necessary, and tribute, is to be paid. One of the most beautiful things said about the early Christians was that said by Pliny the younger. The Emperor asked him to give some account of this new movement of the Nazarene, and the younger Pliny writing revealed his own inability to comprehend it, and yet revealed a very essential glory of the new movement. He said: "All we are able to say about these people called Christians is: First, that they sing hymns about the one called Jesus; and, secondly, that they pay their taxes regularly."

I wonder if Pliny would say that if he lived now. But the very essence of Christianity is in that. Pay the taxes, contribute to the state, and sing while you do it. I can do these two things if you will give me two days. I can do one on Sunday and one on Monday. No, no; sing when you pay; that is the essence of Christianity; but do not forget the paying in the singing.

I am to contribute to the commonwealth, but how? I am to sing about Jesus; I am to remember the crown rights of Jesus Christ. That is to be the condition of my service to the state, and it is to be the limitation of my service to the state; for a Christian man is not only to obey the laws of the state; he is, upon occasion, to disobey them. When is that? When the law of the state is contrary to that of Jesus Christ. The United States owes its existence to the fact that when the laws of a state that was corrupt interfered with liberty of conscience, the Pilgrims left that state and began this new nation. There is the limitation of obedience. Your first duty as a Christian is to contribute your quota of influence to the righteous government of the state. You are to conform to its laws always until they conflict with your relationship to your Master, and then even at the cost of imprisonment and banishment you are to be willing to break them every one that His may be kept.

These are the principles. What is the application of them to the immediate necessities of the day? This first: There needs to be the creation of a Christian conscience in the realm of civic and national matters, and it is quite time the church of God spoke authoritatively on certain matters to the nation itself.

How is this to be done? Not by establishing a state church. The very greatest calamity that ever happened to the church universal was when Constantine of old espoused its cause. Far better that she should have stood away from all the patronage of courts and governments, and dictated the terms of righteousness to government. No state can establish a church. Why not? Because it is the work of the church to establish the state. But the church has not been establishing the state. The church has not been indifferent to civic and national matters, and individual souls have been washing their hands and saying, We have nothing to do with these things; consequently the state has become disestablished, disintegrated. The forces that are governing us are too often not the forces of righteousness because the church of Jesus Christ has been guiltily silent when she should have spoken with the authority of her Lord in righteousness and in love. The time has come when the Christian conscience shall be aroused, and the church shall not say we pledge ourselves to this party or that, but we give expression to the principles of love and righteousness so that the nations will hear us, and hearing us shall be compelled to obey at certain points that are of the utmost importance.

Now if that conscience be aroused, what will happen? There will be no doubt as to where the church stands on certain great questions. The Christian conscience will recognize and then will do battle with the enemies of the state. I venture to suggest five enemies against which the whole Christian church ought to be as one man in its determined hostility. The first is war, and the second is drink, and the third is impurity, and the fourth is gambling, and the fifth is the greatest of them all because it holds them all in its grip - mammon. These are the curses of our states today.

I do not believe that you can find any justification for war. To the Christian man and to the Christian conscience war is the child of hell; and our business in the state is to endeavor to prevent it, to raise our voice at all times, and by every means to prevent our country from undertaking it; and when she has untaken it under the pressure of circumstances, then it is our duty to do all we can to hasten the day of peace, and it is our duty to bring men to see that war is barbaric and fiendish. But there are those in the church who have not been prepared to cast their vote and influence in favor of the principle of peace upon which the kingdom of God is to be built. The church will not bring peace universal, because there is no Christian nation; but the church's influence is to be along the line of the Master's government.

Then, if the church was united, do you think that we should have our nations blighted as they are today by the drink traffic?

What is the church doing? She is guiltily silent and guiltily inactive. Individuals are at work, but the church has never yet risen in the majesty of her possibility and gripped the question. It is her duty to do it.

And impurity. If all the Christian men and women whose names are connected with the Christian church would act as one man, and would make it forever impossible for the impure men, as well as women, to pass muster in what a tremendous effect that would have upon the national life!

And gambling. Until the church has said, by absolute and utter abstention from all forms of gambling, that gambling is theft; until the church has banished the lottery and all other forms of gambling and playing for money from her sales and what power has she, and how dare she raise her voice in the affairs of the nation?

And mammon. Did it ever occur to you that Jesus Christ did not say, "You cannot serve God and the devil"? He said, "You cannot serve God and mammon." I tell you the drink traffic would not be tolerated for four and twenty hours, if it were not for the vested interests behind it. And impurity, and war itself - all these things are homed with the last evil, gold; that is the most devastating, damning influence that ever passed over a man or a nation. Yet we are silent. Our pulpits are silent sometimes because the wealthy man is in the pew; and the press has been bought up almost exclusively by the worshipers of mammon, and it becomes the hardest thing in the world to say a word that touches at the root of this evil. Who is to do it unless the church of God shall do it, unless the church of God in the individual membership therein is interested in, and speaks upon all these great questions?

Now, what is to be the line of our activity? We are to say that legislation is to be carried forward by men of character, that no man has any right to sit in the legislative chamber to help to make laws for the government, unless he himself has a pure clean record. That is an infinitely more important thing than the party to which he belongs. If we allow a man to make laws, who, in his private or business life, is tainted with evils that mar the lives of others, wherein lies the safety of our state? And if that man is to be prevented, who is to prevent him? It is only as Christian men and women say, Here is a piece of influence, small, but God energized my vote, and I cast it for God and righteousness to keep out the impure, to put in the pure.

Then, not only is legislation to be by men of character, but it is to be in the interests of character. There are three things which we ought to set ourselves to do: to see to it that the iniquitous laws upon the statute books are repealed; that the laws that are put there are righteous laws; and, that when a law is made it is not put upon the statute book, and then upon the shelf, but is enforced. Seek your city where you live. If you have any influence at all take every part of it and use it with passionate devotion for righteousness, for love, for the bringing in of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, or the preparation of the nation for His coming to that kingdom.

Now your responsibility about your nation is that you cooperate with the Holy Spirit in preparing the nation for the coming King. If that thought is a new one take your New Testament and study the teaching of Paul in the letter to the Thessalonians, and the teaching of John in his epistles, in both of which the same truth is taught, namely, that there is in the world today a spirit at work that is the spirit of Antichrist, the genius that is against God and against Christ, and that against that spirit there the Holy Spirit. "He that hindereth will hinder until He be taken out of the way." That is to say, the forces of evil will not be allowed to work out to their final head in the person of Antichrist until the Holy Spirit for a season has withdrawn. While the Holy Spirit is here His work is to check, to hinder the evil forces. Are you His temple? Then your life is to be to the same end; not merely the salvation of your own soul, not merely the salvation of your brother's soul, but the influence of your being is to be exerted to hold in check the forces of evil by which you are surrounded. Selfishness in this respect is an absolute contradiction to the spirit of Jesus Christ. I do not believe in the Christianity of a man that has no heart of compassion for the needs of the world and is not content to rest and cast the whole of his influence upon the side of Christ. You owe it to your day, your generation, your nation, that you take up the influence of your life and fling it in the name of God against the forces of evil that are all around you. I claim your every possible iota of influence for Jesus Christ.

What will you say in answer to that claim? Do you say, I feel I cannot touch political life because it is corrupt? My answer is this, You are the salt of the earth, and if political life is corrupt, so much the more reason that godly men should touch it with the antiseptic salt of their consecrated endeavor. Someone else says, But really such an effort as that will not produce the result we are aiming at. That is not our business; issues are not in our hands; our Master will win this nation, by and by, sooner or later, in one way or another - and I do not care to quarrel with theologians as to the method. We all believe He is going to win before He has finished - but in order to win He calls you to act in the face of apparent impossibility, and it is your duty to take your influence, and in your nation by vote and speech and word and deed to salt the nation and light its darkness and make it something more ready for the kingdom.

But I hear someone say, If you could get the whole church to act it will be good; but I am the only one. Suppose that all the raindrops said that; we should have no refreshing showers. Supposing all the flakes of snow said it and refused to fall, we never would have had the mantle of warm white over the landscape taking care of the earth till spring came back again. Suppose that every grass blade said it, we would have no green sward to rest the eye in the glare of the noontide heat. If every coral insect said it, no islands of beauty would deck the Pacific. You are only one. I fling you back on the word of one William Lloyd Garrison, who said, "One with God is a majority." That so gripped me five or six years ago that I had it printed in plain black block type, and it hangs on my study wall where I see it every day when I am home. "One with God is a majority," and if you will take your one life and put it into line with divine movement, not merely for your own salvation, not merely for your church work, but for the nation, then rest assured you are in line and company and cooperation with that movement which, blessed be by the cross of the Christ and His coming again shall win. But until He comes and while I am here, I owe the influence of my own new born nature to the nation to which I belong, to the city of which I am a citizen, to all departments of life which I touch. May God Himself help us to see our responsibility.