**INTERCESSION: PRAYER IN A TIME OF CRISIS BY REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**4. FOR OUR OWN NATION, THAT WE MAY BE DEFINITELY GUIDED IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS AND PERPLEXITY by REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."*

*Romans 13:1-10*

I do not propose any comment on the passage of scripture read. That this is a time of crisis and perplexity, I think no one will deny. That many of us are hardly conscious of how serious the crisis is, I am afraid must be admitted. Sometimes one is almost afraid, lest we are drifting with a smile upon our faces and an almost appalling indifference, to catastrophes that may be terrible; and all this not in one regard alone, but in many. Our difficulties today in national life are many. Perhaps at this moment they are most acute in Ireland; and they are very real also in Wales. I could divide this assembly on either of those subjects. As an assembly, we are unified in that unity of the Spirit of which we were speaking yesterday morning, and we have rejoiced from day to day in the abounding joy of that great and gracious spiritual unity. Nevertheless, it would be quite easy to divide it. Now this is a fact that we ought to face before we begin to pray. Christian souls, equally loyal to the Lord, equally desirous of seeing the coming of His Kingdom everywhere in the world, are nevertheless at this moment strangely and almost tragically at variance. Take the case of Ireland. I am constantly receiving letters from Ireland. In the process of this Conference I have received one such letter, containing a cheque for a piece of Christian work in which I am interested. The writer says that she knows full well that the position I take with regard to Ireland is entirely different from the position which she takes; and she then proceeds to tell me of the desperate straits in which she and her co-religionists find themselves at this moment. That is an illustration of where we are.

Now I do not want to divide this assembly. The only way in which not to do so is to endeavour to find the underlying things that bind us still together, even in the hour of such perplexity as we are facing in Ireland today. There are devout souls I verily believe, who are quite convinced that if Ulster be included, Protestantism will receive a deadly blow. Personally, I believe that if Ireland have Home Rule, it is the death-warrant of Romanism in that land. I have stated both views, in order to show that there is division of opinion among souls who are equally sincere. This then is surely a national crisis. Looking at it, not from the standpoint of politicians or statesmen, but as from the standpoint of the Christian Church is, I confess, to be strangely perturbed. I feel the same about Wales, if I may touch upon that which is not quite so acute at the moment in our thinking. Here I could not only divide but sub-divide this assembly. I personally believe that in the interest of religion the Church should be dis-established. I personally believe that to take any of its money is neither wise nor politic, I should not disendow. Do you not see how I have divided and sub-divided? There are friends of mine in the Anglican communion whom I love with a love as deep in Christ as that I have for any of my own communion, who differ from me about disestablishment; and there are members of the free churches who do not at all understand my attitude about disendowment. I want us thus to face the serious spiritual difficulty which is confronting us as members of the Church of God. Our business is to reveal to the nation all the fact of the Kingdom of God. The Church of God ought to be able at any given moment of crisis, to speak with one voice the one way and the one will of the one King. There are other things of perplexity confronting us.

There is the fact that at this moment we are coming to the final clash and conflict between feudalism and freedom. When we have said that let us again pause. I think I should not be far wrong if I said that in an assembly like this, the general consensus of feeling would be to declare without qualification in favour of freedom in that conflict; yet I want you to hear me patiently, even though you may not agree with me. I speak the things I know. There are souls absolutely loyal to Christ who still believe that the truest system of rule for the nation is feudal rather than free. In my congregation in London today I preach from Sunday to Sunday to many people who hold that view. I talk to those people, I sit at their tables, and I understand their outlook. I differ from them, and they know I do. What are we to do? You say, 'The Church ought to speak on one side or the other.' Yes, but which side? You know which side; and so do those others; and for them it is the opposite side to yours.

Among the first things necessary to us today is that we have to learn to have respect for the conviction of the man who differs from us however profoundly he may differ; that we must cease questioning the sincerity of his conviction or the purity of his motive. It may take a long time to settle these differences, it surely will; but we are half-way toward settlement as within the Christian Church, if we once take up this attitude.

When we begin to pray for the nation, therefore, we have to do it realising that there are difficulties within our own borders; and therefore seeking earnestly to find some common ground where we can stand together whatever our views may be as to current politics and the immediate crises. Some of the most desperate things in the life of the nation are not those of which I have been speaking. They are those rather of the spirit of unfairness that is abroad, the spirit of untruth, the spirit of pride. There is no day passes but that I read the newspapers. I read leading articles in those on both sides of political opinion; and one of the most painful matters in doing so is the perpetual tendency manifested in them to attribute to the other side insincerity and impurity of motive. We must be free from that within the Church. My own view with regard to Ireland - and you must hear it patiently, you may not agree - is that the arming both of the North and of the South, is unconstitutional and illegal, and ought to have been prevented; but I believe in the absolute sincerity of Sir Edward Carson, and of Mr. John Redmond. I confess that I have little hope in the wisdom of men; I have none in any party that is in existence; I have far less faith in party politics than I ever had, I am afraid that they are largely degenerate. But God has led us as a nation in the past. Will any one deny that? God has manifested Himself in our history again and again in hours of terrific crisis. When our fathers armed and fought equally sincere men, God over-ruled, and led us into larger life.

Surely here then is the common ground of our prayer, or the ground of our common prayer; that for a little we leave our convictions on these matters out of account, and earnestly pray God to manifest Himself and to manifest His will. As we pray that let us endeavour to do so without suggesting to the Lord how He shall do it. I think I know how many of these things ought to be settled. I may be wrong. So help me God, I am honest; but I may be wrong, I may be mistaken. Are you prepared to say that too, my friend and brother in Christ, you who differ profoundly from my political convictions? Then we can get together and pray; not that God shall do the thing we think ought to be done, but that He will act.

Oh the tragedy of it that in these British islands of ours, with all our wonderful history, we should be within sight of the possibility of recourse to the devilry of war. It is heart-breaking. Is it not time we got to prayer? It seems to me that in our praying there must be the note of repentance, confession, and true submission to God. We do not now pray as Christian individuals, not merely as members of the Christian Church; we pray as members of the nation. For the sins of England, I am in the measure of my personality, to take responsibility. We need to get down before God in humiliation.

Yet because we are more than members of the nation, because we are members of the Christian Church, we may go before God with all confidence and earnestly pray that He will over-rule the deliberations that are going on in the Houses of Parliament, and behind the scenes, to His glory, and for our good. In answer to such intercession, guidance will surely be given, that shall deliver us from the perils that threaten us.