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

**5. FOR THE WORLD: THAT THE CHURCH MAY UNDERSTAND THE DIVINE MOVEMENTS, AND CO-OPERATE THEREWITH by REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"* *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are ... That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

*John 17:9-11, 21-26*

These few sentences must always in our deeper thought be considered in relation to the whole of the prayer of our Lord.

It seems to me that you must have been arrested by the strangeness of my wording of the suggested line of intercession. Let me tell you how it happened. When I gave myself to quiet thought about these morning hours, and sat down to think about our intercession, I wrote these suggestions one after another thoughtfully, and prayerfully. When I came to what seemed to be the natural ending of our intercession, the ultimate in it, the largest thing in it, that toward which everything else must proceed if we were to apprehend the spiritual significance of these hours, - I wrote, Intercession for the world. Then I said to myself, 'For what are we to ask God on behalf of the world?' Will you think quietly at that point for a moment? What are we going to ask God to do for this world? Are we going to ask Him to love it? Would it not almost be impertinence? Are we going to ask God to save it? That is the way we often pray, and the way we pray about other people. Have we any right to ask God to save any man? Have we any right to ask God to save the world? Do you think God is reluctant? Can you believe for a single moment that if God could save a man He would not do it? I know there are great doctrinal questions involved in that inquiry, hoary controversies of the Church lurk within it, threatening to sap our very life, for the Church is always injured by her theological controversies. I care nothing about that. This is the question, 'What am I to pray for about this world?' I arrived at the point to which I am trying to bring you, when I was thinking. It seemed to me that I heard the voice of God, speaking of this world of ours - so little in dimension in the midst of all the worlds, so small in the universe, yet so mighty in the fact of humanity - and saying, "What could have been done more in My vineyard that I have not done in it." It seemed to me as though God would rebuke me, if I came to Him and asked Him to save the world. He would take me back again to the green hill, to the Cross, and He would say, "What could have been done more that I have not done?"

You see where all this is leading, and where it led me. It led me to say, I cannot pray for the world. Then these old words which I have read - old only in the sense of our familiarity with them - came back to me like a song, encouraging my heart, flinging light upon the problem, helping me to see - do not charge me with irreverence - that Jesus felt exactly the same thing. In that great and matchless prayer He had to say, with that little group of disciples about Him, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine." When I read that, I went on writing this subject, Intercession for the world: that the Church may understand the Divine movements and co-operate therewith.

Let it be immediately recognised, that when our Lord said, "I pray not for the world," He did not suggest abandonment of the world, carelessness about the world; He did not suggest that the whole world had ceased to lie upon His heart as a burden. Anything like a simple-hearted and intelligent reading of the prayer shows that He was thinking of the world all the time.

That was His supreme interest, not the little group of disciples. He saw in them, instruments through whom He could reach the world and manifest His love, and bring the world to His Father and His Father to the world. If God by His gracious Spirit will burn up in our hearts all spiritual selfishness, and deliver us from reading this prayer from the standpoint of spiritual selfishness, as I read some of these things again, we shall see that the world was in the heart of Jesus all the time. He had never forgotten it, never abandoned it.

"I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine... and I am no more in the world, and these are in the world... I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world but that Thou shouldest keep them."

We have often read these words as though Jesus prayed that they should be kept safe, and not harmed by the world. That is very negative, and God is never finally negative, He is positive. That is only half the story, and it is only worth anything as it leads on to the other half.

"Holy Father keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as we are." Why? "That they may all be one... that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." Again, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovedst them even as Thou lovedst Me." Yet once more, "Father, that which Thou hast given Me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

What was Jesus asking? That these men might be with Him by and bye? I know that we have nearly always read it so. Let us think again. He prayed that they might be with Him, and behold His glory; and He linked that petition with this assertion, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Now let us begin there: "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” From that I return to the tenth chapter, and there I find this statement, "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again." I go back a little further and find that He said: "I lay down My life for the sheep." Who are the sheep? The inner circle of disciples? No. "He saw the multitudes... as sheep not having a shepherd."

In the light of these things we learn that He was praying for these men, that they might be with Him in the Cross; that there they might behold His glory. Then listen to the last petitions: "O righteous Father, the world knew Thee not." That is the root trouble. Jesus did not say that, as though He were dismissing the world angrily, as though it were worth nothing. Follow Him through: "The world knew Thee not, but I knew Thee; and these knew that Thou didst send Me; and I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them, and I in them." If that love be in us and Christ be in us, we shall see His glory by fellowship with Him in the Cross, and we shall become the means through which He will reach the world.

If we can get away from our spiritual selfishness, we shall see that the prayer of the Lord was not for the world, for the simple reason that God had done in Him, and was doing, all He could do for the world. He prayed for His own, that they might be able to co-operate with Him, by being truly in fellowship with Him even in the Cross.

The method of Jesus in regard to the great world was that of prayer for the co-operation of those who share His life. Again I have to say a thing that sounds a daring thing, which may almost be misunderstood; yet it must be said. There are things that God can only do through us. He can only reveal Himself to men through men. He can only redeem men through men. He can only bring all the values generated in the eternal passion of His heart into healing connection with humanity, through humanity. That is the meaning of the incarnation. That is the central mystery of our faith. That central method is continuous and persistent.

Not for the world do we pray. There is no need to ask God to love the world, to save the world. For these men whom the Father has given to His Son, we must pray. That is, for ourselves, that we may be in such relationship with Him that He may be able through us to carry out and complete His great purposes for the world.

Jesus one day was talking to a sinning woman Samaria, and after that conversation He said to His disciples, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest." Where, in Judea? No, in Samaria. How did He know? He had just put in the sickle and reaped a sheaf. A sinning, soiled, smirched, spoiled woman! Fields white unto harvest. Wherever the need is direst, the pain sorest, the darkness most dense, there the fields are most white; and God has not left these people, through all their sorrows and ignorance and oppression and need. Out of these very things He generates agony after Himself, capacity for the reception of Himself, the cry of the soul for Him.

The fields are white; but those fields cannot be reaped save through those who are in true fellowship with Him, who share His life. The trouble is that the Church does not see these white fields.

There never has been, through the two millenniums of the Church's history, such a marvellous day of opportunity as this; opportunity not merely created by the fact that national and political barriers are broken down; but by the movements among the people everywhere, movements which unless they be responded to from God, will react in a diabolism worse than the world has ever seen. Doors are open, and I hear the voice again, the voice of God limited, "What can I do more than I have done?"

The moment we begin to pray for the world, we have to pray for ourselves, that God may give us eyes to see. I think that is the supreme thing. I believe when the Church of God sees under the direction of the Spirit, she will find the true line of co-operation. We have within the Church of God today enough wealth to do the whole work. We have enough scholarship to meet every need that is presenting itself to us. We have everything we need, except vision! So let us pray.