**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 23 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE PURPOSE OF THE ADVENT: To Destroy the Works of the Devil by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

*1 John 3:8*

WE ARE APPROACHING THE FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS. IN THE calendar of the Christian year this is the first Sunday in Advent. I am proposing to speak for four successive Sunday evenings on the purposes of the Advent. The importance of the subject cannot be overstated. The whole teaching of Holy Scripture places the Advent at the centre of the methods of God with a sinning race. Toward that Advent everything moved until its accomplishment, finding therein fulfilment and explanation. The messages of the prophets, seers, and the songs of psalmists trembled with more or less certainty toward the final music which announced Jesus' coming. All the results of these partial and broken messages of the past led toward the Advent. It is equally true that from that Advent all subsequent movements have proceeded, depending upon it for direction and dynamic. The writings which we have in the Gospel stories are all concerned with the coming of Christ, with His mission and His message. The last book of the Bible is a book the true title of which The Unveiling of the Christ. Not only the actual messages which have been bound up in this one Divine Library, but all the results issuing from them are finally results issuing from this selfsame coming of Christ. It is surely important therefore that we should understand its purposes in the economy of God.

There is a fourfold statement of purpose which I pro-pose to make. The purpose to destroy the works of the devil, the purpose to put away sin, the purpose to reveal the Father, the purpose to establish by another Advent the Kingdom of God in the world.

In dealing first with the purpose to destroy the works of the devil I am attempting to follow the order of historic appreciation. There is a sense in which these purposes go forward concurrently, the destruction of the works of the devil, the taking away of sin, the unveiling of the face of the Father and the administration of the Kingship of God toward consummation. In yet another sense we may state the order of these things differently. We may say that He came first to reveal the Father, then to deal with sin, presently by way of the second Advent to set up the Kingdom in the world, and ultimately and finally to destroy the works of the devil. I think, as I have already intimated, that so far as historic appreciation of the purposes of God is concerned, I have suggested to you the true order. To the men of Christ's own age, both those who yielded to Him and those who rebelled against Him, He was first of all a reformer - and I pray you do not interpret the meaning of that word "reformer" by those who have followed in His wake or those who preceded Him, but gather all your thought of it from what He was in Himself - a soul in conflict with all that was contrary to the purposes of God in individual, social, national, racial life.

Such was Christ, and there is a sense in which when we have said this we have stated the whole meaning of His coming. His revelation of the Father was toward this end; His putting away of sin was a part of this very process, and His second Advent will be for the complete and final overthrow of all the works of the devil.

Confining ourselves, however, to the simplest meaning of this particular passage, let us notice, first of all, John's description of the Advent. He does not say, "For this purpose, or to this end, was Jesus of Nazareth born." That would be true, but only part of the truth.

Remember, there can be no question as to Whom John referred when he said "the Son of God." We all know that he was writing of the One of Whom he always wrote. We are taken back irresistibly, however, to words at the beginning of John's Gospel and Epistle. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." "That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled." It is impossible to read these words and imagine they are wholly or exclusively spiritual statements. John is most carefully defining the Person. In all the writings of John it is evident that his eyes are fixed upon the man Jesus. Occasionally he does not even name Jesus, does not even refer to Him by a personal pronoun, but indicates Him by a word you can use only when you are looking at an object or a person. For instance, "That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled." Upon another occasion John said, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as that One walked." It is always the method of expression of a man who is looking at a Person. Forevermore the actual human Person of Christ was present to the mind of John as he wrote of Him. How intimate he had been with Him we all know. One of the most tender and beautiful things in all the story of the life of Jesus is the story of John's love for Him, pure human affection for Him. The other disciples loved Him in a sense, and I do not undervalue their love, but it was of a different tone and quality from that of John. You cannot imagine Peter getting very intimately near to Christ. There was something of distance, of breeze and bluster, and of beauty, about the love of Peter. He would be quite content to talk to Jesus across the table, but John must get close to Him and lay his head upon His bosom. There was none of the disciples so intimately associated with the actual human personality of Jesus as John. When John refers to Him it is always in words that thrill and throb with the warm tenderness of human consciousness, of human friendship. Yet there is not one of you here who does not know that if I said no more I would not have uttered half the truth. If John the mystic, the lover, laid his head upon the human bosom of the Man of Nazareth, he heard the beating of the heart of God. If he laid his hand upon Jesus when he talked to Him he knew that beneath the warm touch of the human flesh there beat the mystic majesty of Deity. "That which our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." Mark the contradiction of it in this materialistic age of ours. Can you handle a word? Can you handle life? Yet John says, "This is what we have done." He is perfectly conscious of the flesh, but supremely conscious of the mystic Word veiled in flesh and shining through it. He is perfectly conscious of the human and gets thereby to Deity. So that when John comes to write of this One he speaks of Him as "the Son of God." He remembers the warmth of His bosom, the gentleness of His touch, the love-lit glory of His eyes, but He is "the Son of God."

The word "manifested" presupposes existence prior to manifestation. In the Man of Nazareth there was manifestation of One Who had existed long before the Man of Nazareth.

The incarnation was not an act by which God began to be in any single sense. It was not an act by which God came into nearness to human life. It was an act by which God manifested His nearness to human life, and by which manifestation He was able to do in human life and in human history things He could not have done apart from that selfsame method of manifestation. "To this end was the Son of God manifested."

Now we come to the statement of purpose. The person referred to, the devil. The things to be destroyed, the works of the devil. The purpose declared, to destroy the works of the devil.

The enemy is described here as the devil. I want to take other passages from the writings of John and let their light fall upon this name. In the eighth chapter of John's Gospel it is recorded that Jesus, using this very name, declares of the devil that "he was a murderer from the beginning ... he is a liar." A little further on in the Gospel it is declared it was he who put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. I read in the context of my text that he is the fountainhead of sin, the lawless one. Gather up these thoughts concerning this personality - murderer, liar, betrayer, the fountainhead of sin, himself missing the mark because of lawlessness - and it will immediately be manifest what his works are. The work of the murderer is destruction of life. The work of the liar is the extinguishing of light. The work of the betrayer is the violation of love. The work of the arch-sinner is the breaking of the law. These are the works of the devil. First, as to the destruction of life, for he is a murderer. This consists fundamentally in the destruction of life on its highest level, which is the spiritual. Alienation from God is the devil's work. It is also death on the level of the mental. Vision which fails to include God is practical blindness. On the physical plane, all disease and all pain are ultimately results of sin and are among the works of the devil. These things all lie within the realm of his work as a murderer, destroyer of human life. The Greek word might perhaps be translated more forcefully "man-slayer." He is the slayer of man, in the spiritual, which is supreme; in the mental which marks consciousness, whether spiritual or material; in the body, which is the instrument of the spirit, whether for good or evil. The man-slayer is one who comes in to spoil humanity, to rob it of its life, to blind it spiritually toward God, to limit it mentally because of the blindness of the spiritual, and to bring into it all manner of disease and death in the physical realm.

He is more. He is the liar and to him is due the extinguishing of light, so that men blunder along the way. All ignorance, all despair, all wandering over the trackless deserts of life, are due to the extinction of spiritual light in the mind of man. I can quite imagine someone saying, "You are going outside the realm of what is true when you declare that all ignorance is the devil's work." I abide by that statement, perhaps for reasons which are not ordinarily advanced or held. I will make one contrast in your mind tonight. I claim that in this Man of Nazareth as pure man there was an utter absence of ignorance. His thinking was perfectly clear. He as man saw right through to the heart of mystery, and that because He was never brought under the dominion of sin, never brought under the dominion of the evil one, was able in His life perpetually to rebut every advance of the prince of darkness, who is a liar from the beginning. I am not merely speaking of Him as One infallible in spiritual things. I believe He was also absolutely infallible in other things. I am asked today if I imagine that Jesus knew the laws of nature by the discovery of which in recent years men have made such rapid progress. Yes, absolutely. He knew everyone. I am asked if I believe that He understood the mystery of electricity. Yes. Then you say, "Why did He not tell the race?" The race was not ready for the knowledge. What is true in the spiritual realm is true also in the scientific. He had many things to say which men were then not able to bear. I for one have no part or lot in the view of Christ that He was scientifically half ignorant, while spiritually infallible. You say, "Then He was not upon our level." He was not upon our level. No perfect man was ever upon our level. There was in Him no sin, no darkness, no limitation, and you have one gleam of this fact in the impression He produced upon the men of His own age. He went up to Jerusalem and was talking in the midst of men of culture and men of light and leading, in the midst of the school men. What did they say of Him? "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" "Whence hath this Man the accent of the school, never having been to school? How is it that this Man in His teaching is most evidently familiar with the things we have obtained through strife and difficulty?" They did not answer their question. Men today cannot answer their question, save as they recognize that here was a Man never having learned yet knowing, and seeing clearly to the heart of things. I go back from that illustration, which is in some sense a digression, and yet I think you see its purpose. All ignorance is the result of the clouding of man's vision of God. "This is life eternal," age-abiding life, high life, deep life, broad life, long life, comprehensive life, "that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." The proportion in which man knows God is the proportion in which he sees clearly to the heart of things. You say, "How is it that Christian people have not been able to see these things? How is it that the great discoveries of science have not been made by Christian people?" I would have you remember first that the discoveries of science have always been made in a Christian atmosphere. In the second place, the redemptive work of Christ will not be perfected in humanity until that mysterious morning of His second Advent, when we shall have our new bodily powers as well as our new spiritual powers, and when man is wholly restored to God. Let me say this as superlatively as I believe it. In that day manhood will laugh at the foolish pride of this day, which thinks it understands this world. Sinning man has but scratched upon the surface of the infinite mysteries of this world. By and by, when the redemptive work of Christ has been perfected in man, and in the world, we shall find that all ignorance is banished and man has found his way into light. But the liar, the one who brings darkness, has made his works far spread o'er all the face of humanity, and all ignorance and resultant despair and all wandering aimlessly in every realm of life are due to the work of the one whom Jesus designated a liar from the beginning.

Again, the violation of love, as a work of the devil, is seen supremely in the way he entered into the heart of Judas and made him the betrayer. All the avarice you find in the world today and all the jealousy and all the cruelty are the works of the devil.

Finally, He is the supreme sinner. Sin is lawlessness, which does not mean the condition of being without law, but the condition of being against law, breaking law. So that all wrong done to God in His world, all wrong done by man to man, all wrong done by man to himself, are works of the devil.

To summarize them, death, darkness, hatred, find them where you will, are works of the devil.

The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. If at the beginning we saw Him as a soul in conflict with all these things, remember that was an indication of the program and a prophecy of the purpose. The Advent which we celebrate was not merely the birth of a little child in whom we were to learn the secret of childhood and in whom presently we were to see the glories of manhood. All that is true; but it was the happening in the course of human events of that one thing through which God Himself is able to destroy the works of the devil.

"To destroy." What is this word? It is a word which means to dissolve, to loosen. It is the very same word that is used in the Apocalypse about loosing us from our sins; or, if you will be more graphic, it is the word used in the Acts of the Apostles when you read that the ship was broken to pieces; loosed, dissolved, that which had been a consistent whole was broken up and scattered and wrecked. The word "destroyed" may be perfectly correct, but let us understand it. He was manifested for what? to do a work in human history the result of which should be that the works of the devil would lose their consistency. The cohesive force that makes them appear stable until this moment He came to loosen and dissolve. He was manifested to destroy hatred by the gift of love. He was manifested to destroy lawlessness by the gift of law. He was manifested to loosen, to break up, to destroy the negatives which spoil, by bringing the positive that remakes and uplifts.

He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil as to death by the gift of life. This means first spiritual life, which is fellowship with God. It means also mental life, the vision of the open secret. Not yet perfectly do we understand, but already the trusting soul in this house, utterly devoid of education, hears more in the wind at eventide, and sees more in the blossoming of the flowers than any scientific man. Was it not Huxley who said that if our ears were but acute enough we would hear the flowers grow. You say that is a purely scientific statement. I know it is, and science, in the last analysis, is spiritual. Christ has so far invaded the world that the men who do not name His name are beginning to spell out this great truth. The merely physical scientist of a generation ago has passed never to return. I hear of whitening dawns of psychological investigation, but what does it mean? That men are gradually beginning to hear the singing. There is no simple-hearted child of God in this house but that looking into a flower sees the face of God. I think, perchance, I have told you here before of something that happened in my boyhood's days which I have never forgotten. There came to my father's house a young fellow who had been led to Christ but recently in one of my father's meetings. One day he took me down the garden - I was but eight years old - and he plucked a nasturtium leaf, and putting it in his hand he said, "Look at this." Boy-like, I thought he had found a great curiosity, and hurried to see it. I did not see what he saw. The day came when, by the grace of God, I saw it also. He said, "See, is not God beautiful?" For me, you may take all your botanists if you will give me that man with the leaf in his hand. That is not imagination. It is the open secret. It is what Carlyle called the great significance shining through. Mrs. Barrett Browning was right -

Earth's crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God;

But only he who sees, takes off his shoes -

The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

How many there are in the "rest"!

He who sees has the true intellectual vision, which Christ has bestowed in His gift of life. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God." The gift of life was to destroy death, and the man who has His gift of life laughs in the face of death, laughs triumphantly, and - yes, I will say it - makes fun of death! Do not misunderstand me - I mean for himself, never of the sorrow which comes to the bereaved. I still believe, say what you will, that there was laughter in the Apostle's tone when he said, "O death, where is thy sting?" As though he had said, "What hast thou done with thy sting, death? What hast thou done with thy victory? I trembled in thy presence once, O rider upon the pale horse, but now I laugh in thy face, for thy paleness has become the glistening white of an angel of light." So He destroys the works of the devil by giving the gift of life which destroys death.

As for darkness, this is intimately associated with the thing already said, the gift of light; but remember light always comes out of life. If there be death then there is no vision. If there be life there is light. Light means knowledge and hope and guidance, so that there is no more wandering aimlessly. By bringing light into human life and into the world Christ has destroyed the works of the devil.

As for hatred, He destroys hatred by His gift of love, benevolence - and I am not using the word idly as we often do; I am using it in all its rich, spacious, gracious meaning - benevolence, well-willing, self-abnegation, kindness in the Apostle's sense of the word who, when writing to the Galatians, gives kindness as one of the qualities of love, the specific doing of small things out of pure love. All these things are things by which the works of the devil are being destroyed. Hatred, avarice, jealousy, selfishness, how are these things destroyed? By shedding abroad love which is the warmth of life, as light is its illumination. By these things He destroys the works of the devil.

As for lawlessness, this Jesus destroys by the gift of law, passion for the rights of God, service to my fellow men, the finding of self in the great abnegation, and the finding of self in perfect freedom because I have become the bond-slave of the infinite Lord of Love. The works of the devil, what are they? Death working within us, the spirit that is against truth and light, the darkness of ignorance. The spirit of hatred and malice, avarice and jealousy and the whole unholy brood of things which are unlike God, lawlessness lying at the base of all, the refusal to submit, these are the works of the devil. Nineteen centuries ago the Son of God was manifested, and during those centuries in the lives of hundreds, thousands, He has destroyed the works of the devil, mastered death by the gift of life, cast darkness out by the incoming of light, turned the selfishness of avarice and jealousy into love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness. He has taken hold of lawless men and made them into the willing, glad bond-servants of God. So has He destroyed the works of the devil.

Do not forget the meaning of the Advent historically. It was the invasion of human history by One who snatched the sceptre from the usurper. It was the intrusion of forces into human history which dissolved the consistency of the works of the devil, and causes them to break and fail. "How long, O Lord, how long?" is the cry of the heart of the saint today. Yet take heart as you look back and know that force has operated for nineteen centuries and always toward consummation. Still, the works of the devil are manifest, the works of the flesh are manifest. Yes, but the fruit of the Spirit of life which has come through the Advent of Christ is also manifest. All over the world today on many a branch of the vine of the Father's planting the rich clusters of fruit are to be found. All, so far, is but preliminary. It is twilight only. High noon has not yet arrived; but it is twilight, and noon must come. What the Advent has wrought it will still work. That which it has accomplished in the face of opposition it will accomplish. That which has dissolved the vested and established evils proves to my heart the certainty of the ultimate victory. I tell you that if we have but eyes anointed to see we shall discover the fact that all the works of the devil in the world are wrapped about by the slow burning fires that came when the Son of God was manifested that He might loosen, dissolve, destroy the works of the devil.

The last word is to be personal. The Advent personally was the coming of the Stronger than the strong men armed. It was the coming of One to destroy the works of the devil in my own life. Are they not destroyed? Are they not shaken to their foundations? Are they still established in the fiber of your being? Do you know as you sit in this house tonight that the works of the devil, death, darkness, hatred and rebellion are the master forces of your being? Then I bring you the Evangel. I tell you of One manifested to destroy all such works. I tell you not merely as a theory, but as having the testimony of history attesting the truth of the announcement of my text. I do not move you by that! Suffer me, then, to tell you as a word of personal and actual experience: not that in me the victory is perfectly won, not that the Master's work is accomplished, but that in me, solemnly, I bear the testimony, the forces of this Christ have operated and are operating, and the things that were formerly established are loosened and are falling to decay. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. If tonight you are in the grip of forces of evil, if you realize that in your life his works are the things of strength, then I pray you turn with full purpose of heart to the One manifested long ago, Who is here now, Who, in all the power of His gracious victory, will destroy in you all the works of the devil and set you free.