**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 03 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**HUMANITY AND DEITY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Bring then the offspring of God.*

*Acts 17:29*

THE TEXT OCCURS IN THE COURSE OF THE ADDRESS WHICH Paul delivered on Mars Hill. I am quite conscious that Paul has been somewhat criticized for the method he adopted at Athens. It has been said that he attempted to adapt himself to local conditions and surroundings and signally failed. Moreover, it has been affirmed that when presently he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, and said, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," he was in his own mind reflecting upon the mistake he had made when, coming to Athens, he had attempted to speak to the Athenian listeners in a language which they would be most likely to understand. I have made reference to this view of Paul's attitude simply to say that I hold it to be utterly unwarrantable and false. He always manifested his great sense of the need of adapting the manner of his message to the men who listened, while he was careful never to change its essential note or lower its highest claim by one single hair's breadth. I submit to you that when he wrote to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," he neither intended to put his message to them into comparison with his method at Athens, nor did he mean that the only message he had to deliver to men anywhere was the message of the cross. His reason for so writing was that they were still living a carnal life, and he could not pass away from the first principles of Christianity because they had not made response to the claims of that earliest declaration. The cross was not Paul's ultimate and final message. "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead." All the spaciousness of his message was created by the fact that while he never forgot the fundamental truth of Christianity, that of the cross, he left the first principles and passed on to the perfection of teaching as he attempted to lead men to see how in resurrection life they had possession of all that was necessary for the realization of the purpose of God within them.

If Paul's method at Athens is not to be criticized, it must be examined and understood. I ask you to notice that in the words of the text, "Being then the offspring of God," the Apostle was reaffirming the truth of which these people were already in possession intellectually. He was protesting against their attempting to make to themselves likenesses of God. His whole spirit had been stirred within him as he found them to be not - as the Authorized Version incorrectly rendered it - "too superstitious," but "very religious." He discovered all through Athens evidences of the religious character of the people. That was the great thing which moved his heart. Their deep, underlying interest in religion was manifest in their temples, their altars, their idols. So much was this so that they had even erected an altar to "the unknown god." Recognizing the underlying religious capacity of the Athenians, Paul protested against the way in which they were attempting to satisfy it. He tells them God "is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." This "unknown god" to whom you have erected an altar I declare unto you. You have said that I am "a setter forth of strange gods." I am the setter forth of the God to Whom you have already erected your altar. "He is not far from each one of us ... as even certain of your own poets have said. For we are also His offspring."

Of set purpose, quietly and deliberately he reaffirmed this truth, and proceeded to make the application which was necessary at the moment. "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone," that is, we ought not to imagine that we can make something like Him of something which is less than ourselves. When you make likenesses of God in gold or silver or stone, you degrade the God Whom you yet know to be the One of Whom you are the offspring. So much for the setting of the text.

I bring you this message today, although its application is a different one. Being then the offspring of God, ye ought not to degrade yourselves by being satisfied with anything less than that which Christ laid down as the supreme and final injunction of His ethic, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Being then the offspring of God, the one true passion of every human life ought to be to become like Him, and so to be true to the underlying fact and force of personal life.

It is a great truth, though I am inclined to say, improperly used by some people. False deductions have been made from it, and still are being made, and because improperly used by some, it is feared by others. I believe that as we see this truth individually, we shall be prepared to listen to the call of Christ to come to Him for life; as we understand this truth collectively we shall be busy in the enterprise of making known the great Evangel to the men at home and in the far distant places of the earth. I do not hesitate to say that it is this conviction which is the driving inspiration of all my life and ministry and work.

Man is the offspring of God. What is this word "off-spring"? It occurs about twenty times in the New Testament and is translated in seven ways. It is translated "race" seven times. It is translated "offspring," as in our text, three times; "kinds," three times; "kind," twice; "countrymen," twice; "stock," twice, and "kindred," once. You will at once see that running through all these words there is one thought, or one particular quantity, and it is to that I desire to draw your attention. I think perhaps we come nearer to the true sense of the Greek word here translated "offspring" by using the Latin word which has come into the common speech of today, genus. A genus includes all the species which, differing in proportion and colour, are yet of the same life essence, and there you have the thought in the word translated "off-spring."

I shall do no violence to the text if I change the word and say the poets declared and Paul reaffirmed that man is kin of God, that by first creation he is intimately related to God. Man is not in any essential power of his personality the creation of the devil. Man is in every essential power of his personality the creation of God. Every man is a thought of God, created, wrought out into visibility. Every man is made, according to the teaching of Scripture, in the likeness of God, in the image of God, and every man has entered into the power of his own life by the inbreathing of the breath of God. The life I live now - I am not speaking of my Christian life, that inner mystic life which gave me a new vision and a new understanding, and a new capacity for realizing myself - I speaking of my first life - call it natural if you will - is God created. It is life which is kin to the life of God, so that when I am told that all humanity is of God, I am told that which is perfectly true according to the teaching of Scripture. Yet, Iet us follow this. Where does it lead us?

There are three lines I shall attempt to follow. First, the evidences of Deity in humanity. Second, the failure of the Divine in the human, and, finally, the restoration of man to God. To omit any one of these is to omit something of Christian truth and doctrine. To begin by the declaration of man's restoration to that which he has never lost is illogical and foolish. To begin by declaring that man has failed to realize the possibility of his own being, and to deny the possibility is again illogical. On the other hand, to begin by declaring that man is essentially kin of God, and to deny the fact of wrong and sin and evil, is to contradict the common experience of every man who has lived an ordinary life in the midst of the things of this world. The three things are necessary if we would understand what Christ has to say to this and every age concerning man.

First, then, the evidences of Deity in humanity. When Wordsworth sang

Trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God who is our home

he sang as one of the seers. A study of humanity in the light of God's self-revelation results in an almost overwhelming mass of evidence for the kinship of man to God. The ultimate conviction of such consideration is that all the essentials of humanity are kin to Deity. Only the accidentals are unlike God. Do not read into my word accidental anything less than ought to be in it. An accident may be a tragedy, a catastrophe. Only the accidentals are unlike God. Take some few of the evidences.

You will find in every human being a passion for life. Have you ever asked yourself what the passion for life really means? How is it that everywhere, in all circumstances, in all ages, all men manifest a hunger for life; that the deep cries of humanity which are recorded for us in the simple terms of Holy Scripture are the cries of humanity everywhere; that when the young ruler looked into the face of Jesus and said "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit age-abiding life?" he was simply speaking out of the depth of his humanity? He was saying what every man says sooner or later. Wherever you find a human being you find a being in revolt against death asking for life. What is this passion for life? It is born of the consciousness of the infinite. It is born of the fact that in the soul of man there is a profound consciousness from which he never escapes, of the fact of age-abiding life. His mind encompasses infinitely more than he can understand. He tells you he cannot grasp the thought of the infinite either as to time or space; but the man who knows a thing is unknowable has grasped that thing. In the moment when I know that I stand at the centre of infinite reaches and stretches and forces, there is born within me a passion to hold, to possess, to grasp. It is that which puts man into the attitude of revolt against death.

Wherever you go you will find men characterized by a passion for dominion. The campaigns of humanity demonstrate the truth of it. Man is forevermore attempting to win his territory and reign over it. Wherever you find me a man determined to hold the sceptre I show you one of whom the psalmist sang long ago. "Thou hast made him but little lower than God" - for dominion. The passion for dominion which is in the human heart is demonstration of man's relation to God.

Again, wherever you find man, you find a thirst for knowledge. If you have any children in your home and will listen to them you will learn wonderful lessons. You will find in those days when they are first beginning to talk that the words which most often pass their lips are "Why?" "How?" "What?" In asking these questions the child proves its capacity for knowing, and if you will follow that child through all its years, to youth and manhood and even old age, you will find it asking the same questions. Man is asking to know. He begins as a little child: "Why do flowers grow, mother?" end when he is an old man he has not answered that question unless he has listened to Christ as He says to him, "Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin, yet your Father garbs them with a glory which Solomon never knew." That is the answer. Christ summarizes all truth about knowledge when he says, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Wherever you see a man seeking knowledge - he may be seeking it wrongfully, but the fact that he seeks it demonstrates him the offspring of God.

Again, take man's eagerness to create. All the inventions of the centuries demonstrate man's eagerness to make a new thing. The artist will tell you that art is a passion for creation. The passion for the new is always evidence of man's desire to create. It may be journalism, it may be theology. Man, foolishly, or otherwise, is after the making of something new. The passion for creation is demonstration of man's kinship to God.

Take yet another illustration. The appreciation of beauty which you will find everywhere in the world is demonstration of the same thing, whether in art, sculpture, poetry, or music. Of course, I take it for granted that no one will say to me, "What has beauty to do with God?" If you do ask that question, I remind you of the words of the ancient prophet who, in an ecstasy of worship cried out, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty." The admiration of beauty is everywhere. It is demonstration of the fact that humanity is offspring of God.

Take another illustration on a higher level. Man's admiration for goodness. You say, "Is that universal?" Absolutely universal. Remember, I said "admiration"! I do not mean that all men are good. Far from it. I do mean that you cannot find me a man in all the circle of your acquaintanceship who in the deepest of him does not admire goodness. He may affect not to admire it, but in the deepest of him he knows that it is high and noble. It is there - the conviction of the goodness of goodness, the beauty of holiness.

Once again, man's capacity for love is an evidence of his relationship to Deity.

None of these things has come into human life as the result of the influence of sin, evil, and the devil. All these are found in humanity as a whole. In some measure they are found in every man. In some men someone essential is more prominent than the others. These facts are demonstrations of the truth which the poets sang and which Paul reaffirmed, that man is the offspring of God.

If I sent you away with that as the only message I should be false not only to the Bible, but to all your experience Think for a moment of the failure of the Divine in the human. When Heber sang

Where all the prospect pleases

And only man is vile,

he uttered the most tragic and awful truth. He sang a thin we would fain blot out of our hymnbooks, but we dare not. It is true. It is when I see man in his magnificence as offspring of God that I really understand his ruin. It is the sense of man's true kinship to God which reveals his awful failure as nothing else can do. Inter-human comparison may satisfy me, but this dignity of which I have been speaking demonstrates the degradation which I find all about me. If man is not kin of God in specific and special manner by creation, what is he? If he be merely of the dust and only of the dust, only so much related to God as the flowers are related to God, I quit my preaching. If that is all the truth about man, then man is doing very well: If indeed man is the outcome of the dust by the force of the one life common in the flower and man and God, then let me find an honest occupation; because man is climbing up, let me leave him to his climb. Why should I interfere? If that be true, there may still be room for the ethical cult, but the vocation of preaching the Evangel is a past vocation, and has been a ghastly mistake and an awful failure. But when I see in every human face the stamp of the image of God, and when I know that man is more kin of God than any other form of creation, then I begin to see man's degradation, and in every one of the illustrations I have taken to prove man's relation to Deity I have evidence of man's failure in that respect. Man's passion for life is confronted with the necessity for death, and he cannot by any means escape. Man's desire for dominion is defeated by a sense of slavery. The thirst for knowledge is intensified by the feverishness of agnosticism. Agnosticism never has been and never can be an intellectual resting place. No man who is an intellectual can rest there. He may have to declare his agnosticism, but it will make him more than ever restless. If he be indeed intellectual his thirst for knowledge is forever answered by a point beyond which he cannot go, until the Word of God has spoken the mystic secret in his ear.

Man's eagerness to create is ever unsatisfied in that nothing is ever new. The love of the beautiful is ever conscious of an unattained beauty, and here is the principal point, the admiration of goodness is the agony of inability to realize it. Is it true that men everywhere see how good goodness is? It is equally true as Paul wrote - and he voiced not merely a theological creed but the actual experience of life - "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice." If it is true that when a man takes strong drink he is engaged in a quest for God - and I believe it is true - is he finding God that way? The man stooping over the stagnant pool is seeking water, but is he finding water? Is it not unutterable folly for that man to attempt to satisfy his thirst with the water of the stagnant pool when the living streams are gushing from the rock just at hand. All these are demonstrations of a degradation which needs some power to lift it. In every human life there is this paralysis. There is the vision of goodness but no virtue that can translate the vision into history. The capacity for love is ever suffering for lack of the final centre. The sum total is failure. All fail in greater or less degree in every man. Flaming exceptions are all partial. Every demonstration of man's kinship to God is evidence of his degradation, his failure.

What message has the Christ of the New Testament to this double fact in human life? I make my answer first by saying that Christ recognizes the double fact. It was His recognition of the double fact which created the passion of His heart. When He saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd He saw them in their ruin, and at the back of the ruin He saw the Divine intention. Let no man imagine that he has recently discovered the fact of man's relationship to God. Christ proclaimed it long ago. He saw not merely the great capacity, He saw also its paralysis, and His heart was moved with compassion in the presence of it. The whole meaning of Christ's mission in the world is that He addressed himself to the two facts, the fact of man's kinship to God, and the fact of man's degradation. When Isaac Watts sang,

In Him the sons of Adam boast

More blessings than their father lost,

he sang a solo with all the infinite harmonies of the Evangel sounding behind and through it. Jesus confronts man in his kinship and ruin and makes possible the realization of the kinship of God by the negation of the forces of wrong which have brought man to the place of degradation. How does He do it?

First, consider this fact. The things I have said of man are true of Christ in part, but only in part. The things I said first of man are all true of Him. The things I said of man secondly are not true of Him. Remember that first of all He realized all that which man feels himself capable of by creation, and yet, never can realize in actual experience. Men feel the passion for life. Jesus possessed it so that He could say, "No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." They are words He actually uttered. If I cannot understand aII the depth of their meaning, I can understand the first simplicity of them, and in that simplicity I find that Christ declares that no man can take His life from Him. In the laying down of it He will do it voluntarily and take it again. Did He take it again? On your answer to that question depends your relation to the Christian fact. If you say, No, then He did not rise, "Then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain … we are of all men most pitiable." If you say Yes, He did take it again, then His taking of it again demonstrates the fact that He laid it down and that no man could have taken it from Him had it not been His will to lay it down.

Man seeks dominion: He exercises dominion. Standing once upon the mountain heights, Christ said to a group of fishermen, "All authority bath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations." They started, and all the triumphs of Christianity have been won in the name and power of Christ. He rose from the dead and grasped the sceptre of universal empire.

We speak of knowledge and the desire to know. Our knowledge is limited. Jesus said, "This is the age-abiding life, to know God." He also said, "Father, I have known Thee." He possessed the ultimate secrets. We speak of the desire to create: He said, "I make all things new." We speak of man's admiration for beauty and his inability to overtake it: He declared - and the centuries demonstrate the truth of it - "I am the bright and morning star." Other men admire goodness and cannot realize it. He stands challenging the ages by His words, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." Other men have capacity for love. He stands in the centre, the flaming, eternal vision, and says, "I ... abide in His love." So that all man is in kinship to God by first nature, this Man is. All that man is in degradation, this Man is not. Identified with the essential human nature of the sinner, He is separated by in finite distances from all the sin of the sinner and all the limitation of knowledge resulting from the sin of the sinner. The lonely Man! But I am not saved by that fact. The contemplation of the great ideal never communicates dynamic to paralyzed man. I may gaze upon the beauty but I am not thereby transformed into it. I may see the perfection of His life, and all it does for me is to bow me to the dust in shame Have you seen it? Then do you not know it in your own experience? I say to you tonight, in the name of God, that the man who tells me that he has seen Christ, and hopes within his own life by some effort of his own to reach Him, has never seen Him.

To see the vision, to see the spotless, matchless purity, to see human life in Christ is to know how weak I am, how low I am in the scale, how far off I am from Him, it is to now the power of the poison that paralyzes me, and to cry out in agony of soul, "If that Man has done none other for me than to reveal to me the beauty of human life He leaves me upon the highway bruised and helpless."

Thank God, I have an Evangel! The Evangel tells me that this Man perfect in realization in His life entered into all the limitations resulting from sin, was numbered with the transgressors in birth and baptism, and all the circumstances of poverty and pain, and yet I am not so saved, for by sympathy no man can save his brother. I follow Him reverently until I see Him in the hour of a great cross - a cross that grows upon my vision in its height and depth, and in the wide sweep of its outstretched arms, the cross upon which I once saw the Galilean carpenter, but upon which I now see God manifest in flesh. There in the mystery of that cross I know that He has entered into the very place of the ultimate issue of my sin. When you are told that we of the Evangelical faith declare that one man by dying saved the race, say it is not true. We make no such affirmation. We do affirm that the one lonely Personality in all the ages Who was man and God, God and man, God-man, God manifest, by dying provided plenteous redemption for the whole race. There in the cross, in which there is wrought out into visibility the eternal verities which I never could have known otherwise, I see how I, kin of God, yet ruined, may lift my face again toward the light, for by the sacred, hallowed, overwhelming mystery of the cross I have life.

Every man is capable of Deity. When Christ calls He calls to the deepest in man. No man can realize the possibility of his first creation who has once sinned a sin that leads him into distance and paralysis, save as he is born again, born anew of the Spirit, and as he abandons himself to the grace of God.