**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 19 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE DEITY OF JESUS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

*Colossians 2:9*

IN THE MIDST OF MULTIPLIED SERVICE IT IS GOOD THAT WE should ever and anon remind our hearts of the central creeds which are the perpetual inspiration of service. No one, in thoughtful moments, can possibly undervalue a creed, a belief, a conviction, a certainty of the mind. I very readily concede that written creeds are encumbrances, imprisoning the mind, giving occasion for heresy hunting, and sometimes creating dishonesty on the part of such as profess to hold them. No written creed can suffice for a thinking man for long. But a creed is an absolute necessity. All service springs from belief. I do nothing save upon the basis of conviction, and the conviction which lies behind the conduct is the creed. Attempts have been made to differentiate between religion and theology, and I am quite conscious that there is a difference. But if we make the difference so marked as to entirely separate the two, then we have not understood either the one or the other. It has been said that religion is the life of God in the soul of a man, and theology is what a man thinks about God. I am prepared to accept that as correct definition, and yet I remind you that these two things are interdependent. A man's life is the outcome of his thought. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And it is important to Christian life and Christian service that we should under-stand what our underlying creed is.

In Christianity creed has always to do with Christ. The Church is Christocentric, and all the differences among theologians are, in the last analysis, Christological differences. The difference between Trinitarian and Unitarian is difference in conviction about Christ. The difference between Calvinist and Arminian is difference in interpretation of the meaning of Christ and His work. Yes, and if you will let me come to a matter which some may consider to be of minor importance, the difference between what is known as the pre-millennial view of the advent and the post-millennial is, finally, difference in opinion concerning the Christ. So that if you take the minor differences, or the great differences which divide Christendom at this hour, they are all differences concerning Him.

From the writings of the Apostle Paul a very few sentences might be gathered as setting forth his own personal relation to Christ. As to experience, you would naturally select his word, "To me to live is Christ." As to the perpetual burden of his exhortation to Christian souls you would select his word, "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." As to his conception of Christian service, of its nearest and furthest application, you would select the words, "I am debtor … I am ready ... I am not ashamed of the Gospel." And, similarly, his Christology is expressed in this text. All that Paul wrote about Jesus Christ, and all that he believed concerning Jesus Christ, and all which he did in the name of Jesus Christ, finds here its simplest and sublimest expression.

This letter is the crowning one of his system so far as the glories of Christ are concerned, and it is co-related to the Ephesian letter, in which he shows the Church in all its ultimate beauty. But in this letter he is dealing with Christ, and in my text you have the profoundest thing he wrote, the gathering up into one brief statement of all his conviction concerning Christ. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." This reveals his conception of Christ as to His purpose, as to his Person; and if we take it in connection with that which follows, we see what is his conviction concerning Christ as being the resource of His people: "and ye are made full in Him."

I propose an examination of the statement, an investigation as to its truth, and, finally, an application of it to our-selves and to our service.

Paul says: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"; and the first question I ask is one concerning the Person. Of whom is Paul writing? Is he at this point speaking of some mythical person? Has he lost his view of the Divine-human Christ at this point? He is evidently speaking of that Person to Whom he refers in the opening of this letter as "the Lord Jesus Christ." Who was this? I go back to the early history of Paul, and I find it characterized by his opposition to One of Whom he spoke as "Jesus of Nazareth." Upon two occasions does he so describe Him. Once when he declared that he had thought he ought to do everything in his power against the name of "Jesus of Nazareth," and again when he affirmed that Jesus so named Himself out of the excellent glory. In answer to his inquiry, "Who art Thou?" the voice said: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest." So that in the earlier years of Paul he had known of One spoken of among men as Jesus of Nazareth. There had come into the life of this man a great change. How had the change come? It had come, according to his own testimony, on an occasion when there came to him a vision of this same Jesus and the sound of His voice. For him from that time this Person became infinitely more than he had dreamed. Saul of Tarsus had thought of this Man as of Nazareth. He may have thought of Him as perfectly sincere; but he certainly thought of Him as grossly mistaken, and he believed the things He taught were heresies, and that the claims He made could not be substantiated, and, consequently, that the men following Him were mistaken men. But that description of the Person dropped out of his vocabulary, and, instead of describing Him as Jesus of Nazareth, as the men of the age described Him, Paul came to describe Him as the "Lord Jesus," as "Christ Jesus," as "Jesus Christ."

Thus all this man's life and ministry after Damascus resulted from changed convictions about this Person. His opposition to the Person had been opposition to a Man Jesus, Who taught a new way, and Who had been put to death, and Who, His fanatical followers imagined, was alive again. His lifelong devotion was to the same Man Who had revealed Himself to him so as to change his entire conception of Him. What was the new conception that captured his heart, compelled his will, became the driving force in his life? We have it in my text. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Paul's yielding of himself to this Man, Paul's surrender of himself, intellectually, emotionally, volitionally, was not the surrender of a disciple to a human teacher. It was the surrender of a man to his God. He had discovered in this Person all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And when he made that discovery he saw the folly of his way, and ceased, with an abruptness that was volcanic, the whole of his antagonism to the followers of the Nazarene, dropped out of his vocabulary the purely human description, "Jesus of Nazareth," and spoke of Him ever after in words that indicated His infinite superiority and dignity as the "Lord Jesus," "Christ Jesus," "Jesus the Christ." So that the Person to Whom my text refers is the Man of Nazareth. When Paul says here, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," he has not lost sight of the Man, he has not forgotten the One Whom he persecuted, Who revealed Himself to him on the Damascus road, the same and yet another. The eyes of the apostle are on that same Form which had appeared to him in glory upon the road, and his ear still hears in imagination that same human voice which, nevertheless, had in it the thunder of the infinite and all the accents of Deity. And of that One he says, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Let us look at these terms carefully. I begin with the word "Godhead." This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. We have in the Roman epistle, from the pen of the same writer, another word also translated "Godhead," where he speaks of that which man may discover of God by the light of nature. But the words differ in their etymology and in their use, and the difference is fairly accurately described in our own language by the difference between Divinity and Deity. The word in Romans may be translated Divinity; but the word here cannot be so translated. It has a deeper and profounder meaning, and we need most carefully to distinguish between these two terms, "Divinity," and "Deity." Divinitas was a common word in the Latin language. But the Latin Christian writers coined a new word - the word Deitas - from which our word Deity comes, and they coined that word to express the thought and meaning of this Greek word which occurs in my text. What, then, is the difference between the two? This particular word suggests absolute Godhead rather than manifestations of the attributes of Godhead. You find Divinity in every man, but you do not find Deity in every man. You can find Divinity through all Nature. There is not a blade of grass that has not something of Divinity in it; no flower that blossoms that has not some manifestation of Divine power, and Divine presence, and Divine beauty, and Divine glory. But you cannot take this word and use it in the same sense. There is not a single flower that blossoms, no fair tree that spreads itself in the forest, no mighty deep, in which you can discover absolute Deity. God can make nothing but that He puts something of Himself into it; and there are manifestations of God everywhere in Nature, but you do not find proper and absolute Deity anywhere in nature, nor in any human being. Now, mark what the apostle says here as to his conception of this Man of Nazareth. He says: "In Him dwelleth" not Deity merely, but "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of Deity."

That brings us to another word. The word "fullness" means the totality, the pleroma. Paul, in this Colossian letter, was dealing with the Gnostic heresy, and one of the favorite words of its exponents was pleroma, fullness. They were perpetually teaching the fullness of Deity, and that the fullness of Deity had its manifestations in a hundred ways. Said they, It is manifested through all men and all Nature, and the whole manifestation is the sum total of Deity. Paul takes their word and declares that the pleroma dwelleth in Him. He had seen the Man Jesus in the glorified form, had heard His voice. It was the same Man of Nazareth. Paul never dreamed that the One Who spoke to Him on the way to Damascus was any other than the One Who had spoken to men before. He had imagined Him to be a mere Man, child of His age, limited, ignorant, mistaken, blundering, murdered; but he found out that "in Him dwelleth the pleroma of essential Deity, the fullness of the Godhead." In the previous chapter, you remember those wonderful words in which Paul tells us of the three facts about this Lord Jesus Christ. He first indicates His relation to Deity. To the Father He is "the Image of the invisible God," which does not mean something made like God, but the outshining into visibility of the actual and essential God. The only difference between Jesus and Deity was that Deity is invisible, and He was visible. Then he tells us the relation of this self-same Person to creation. "In Him all things consist," hold together. He thus declares that the Man Who arrested him on the way to Damascus, Jesus of Nazareth, holds all created things together. He had found the Deity, Who spoke and it was done, and by Whose Almightiness the whole process of creation was held together, or was consistent. Finally, he declares the relation of this Person to the Church. By the way of the shed-ding of blood He had made reconciliation.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Image of the invisible God, Jesus of Nazareth, Creator of the whole universe and Sustainer thereof, Jesus of Nazareth, dying upon a rough Cross, God in passion for the salvation of a lost race. Everything brought down to the span of human observation, and yet "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Now mark, I pray you, the other two words of the declaration: "Dwelleth bodily." "Dwelleth." Notice carefully the present tense, that perpetual present tense by which the apostle teaches that in Him, this Person toward Whom he is always looking, and concerning Whom he is forever writing, and Whom he is always serving, that "in Him dwelleth," the eternal and essential fact, a fact before incarnation. But the word in my text that arrests us, and is of value to us, is that final word "bodily." Do not read it as though it meant wholly. The word literally means corporeally, that this essential fact of Deity has been wrought out into permanent manifestation, that "in Him" is "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The Lord Jesus Christ, according to Paul, is God, essentially, absolutely, actively, corporeally; and the purpose of the bodily manifestation of Deity is that of intrusion into the consciousness of man. God came no nearer to humanity by the way of incarnation; but God did come into the consciousness of blind humanity by the way of incarnation.

Now, if you ask, How can this be? you will find no answer. It absolutely transcends explanation. But if you take away this corporeal Presence of Deity in the universe of created things, then what have you left? You do not explain the ineffable mystery of this Man's being and life. The fact is announced, and the mystery as it remains is the only satisfactory explanation of the great fact of the Christian religion.

That leads me to some words of investigation. I would that we could think of the Person of these records apart from many of the traditions in the midst of which we have grown up. We read the records, and we think of the Person as merely localized, and incidental, and of a past, and there results a subconscious impression which it is a little difficult to state in words, but which is incomplete, and therefore false.

Our need is the measure of our conception of God. It is by my lack that I have an idea of God. God is all that which I lack. By my emptiness I have a conception of the fullness of Deity. If I have no emptiness, if I am full and satisfied, then I lose my conception of what fullness means. Fullness is that which I have not. What are the things that man craves? First, life, and at the point where he knows he is limited, he thinks at once of the illimitable life, and he knows that is God. Man craves holiness, and at the point of his recognition of his own failure to realize holiness he thinks of the ineffable Holiness, of holiness, it may be, in the abstract, and yet as existing, and that is God. Strength man seeks after in every department, and at the point of his weakness he is conscious of the fact of strength that is not his, and that is God. Knowledge man is ever seeking; knocking at doors, demanding answers, prying into secrets, and forevermore he is arrested. But he knows that knowledge exists, that there is a knowledge that he does not possess, and that knowledge is God. If I have no sense of limitation I have no sense of God. God is to me that which is beyond my limitation.

In this Person of the Gospels I find One Who lacked the sense of limitation by which I think of God. There is not a sigh after life in all His words; He possesses it. He declares that He possesses it. He declares that He so possesses it that He can lay it down, and take it up by his Father's decree. Holiness? His one perpetual claim was that of sinlessness. He is not seeking after holiness. It is His. "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" is His challenge to all the sinners of His age and every age. Strength? Throughout the whole of his life you see Him moving in conscious strength to the accomplishment of all the purposes of His heart. Knowledge? He never asks questions; He never institutes inquiry. He is never learning. That was the supreme wonder of the men of His own age, not the wonder of the provincials of Nazareth, but the wonder of the metropolitans, of the scribes and Pharisees and rulers of Jerusalem. Listen: "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" He was never learning, but He knew. So that all of Deity, of which I am conscious through my limitation, I find realized in Him; and the very things for which I am seeking He possessed. Life, holiness, strength, knowledge, and a score of other things, for these are but illustrations taken almost at random, are all in Him. The things that make up Deity to me, the fullness of Deity, I find in Him.

Take a step further. What have been the results of the presence of this Person in the world? As the result of His presence in the world, the world has intellectually realized God as never before. God is holy, is loving, is self-sacrificing; but these conceptions of God had never been really understood until this Man lived amongst us. So also the world has had a new conception of man, as spiritual in essence, and as only able to realize the present life as his life has dealings with the infinite and the eternal.

But, practically, what has this presence in the world meant? Rest. "Come unto Me ... and I will give you rest." This is the call of Deity to humanity, and humanity heard it, and has been coming to this Man ever since, and has been finding rest. And not only rest, but realization of all the forces of human life personally and relatively. These facts attest the truth of the doctrine which Paul teaches. Test the intellectual by all other teachers. Mohammed came to teach the world a great lesson, as Carlyle has shown in his book, Heroes and Hero Worship. Mohammed stood for two things about God which were absolutely true. First, Allah akbar - God is great; second, Islam - submission. And Buddha's idea of God, if one may venture to attempt in a sentence to state it, was the idea of God as Self-conscious; so that, as from His Being there emanated different castes according to whether men came from head, or hand, or feet, they went back into completion to Him, losing consciousness. What were the practical issues of these things? Look at Mohammedanism today. Look at India today. These men were prophets. I will grant that they were true men and sincere. But as human teachers about God, they took hold of thoughts of God and made them all the fact of God, and failed disastrously. But here came a Man into human life, a Man of wisdom, a Man of human friendship, a Man eating and drinking, and He so came into human life that, without enunciating great philosophies, speaking only simple things, He brought into the world's consciousness the conviction of God which is not a conviction of things about God, but a consciousness of God which lifts, and rests, and realizes, and puts upon the brow of every man who hears and obeys, the very glory of God Himself. This is not Man merely. "In Him dwelleth all the pleroma of Deity," and through the veil of His flesh Divine there flamed out upon human life infinite and eternal light, and as men have come to it, and walked in it, they have found God, and have been healed and helped.

Then I submit to you that these are the findings. The results demonstrate the truth, and they are the realization of God and the resultant finding of life. Wherever there have been departures from these conceptions of Christ, they have lived only while they have retained results, which were the outcome of these conceptions. Put Jesus back again where He was in Paul's thinking before Paul's life was changed. Make Him Jesus of Nazareth, a sincere and blinded and failing Man among men, make Him that, make Him only that, burn your Pauline writings, sweep out the whole catholic conception of Him, and in half a century Christianity will have lost its power of moral uplift, and fail to bring men into union with God.

A final word by way of application. What effect should this doctrine have upon personal experience? That is the main argument of the letter, and if you will read the context you will see exactly what I mean. "Take heed lest there shall be anyone that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The first application is that I find in this Christ an absolute sufficiency. But I find in my relation to Him a great responsibility. What effect does this conception of Christ have upon our service as individuals and as a church? This is the deepest fact as basis for all our work. We are bringing men to God when we bring them to Christ. But the cosmic passion is the expression of that. As He is Creator, and in Him all these things consist, anything out of order will make the heart of those who are His hot and restless.

A serious word, which one would speak with all carefulness and sincerity, is that there must be separation on the part of those who hold this doctrine concerning Christ from all those who hold any other. They may be perfectly sincere. We must grant their sincerity. We are not to ascend any throne of judgment and pronounce our final verdict upon those who do not hold this view of Christ. But I say, in all kindness and all honesty, there can be no agreement, and no fellowship, and no co-operation between the man who makes Jesus Christ a child of His age, a Man among men, sharing Divinity in common with the rest, and in no other degree; and a man who looks into His face, and says, "My Lord and my God," believing that "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."