**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 02 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SECRET AND REVEALED THINGS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

*Deuteronomy 29:29*

THESE WORDS CONTAIN ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT principles for the conditioning of all life, and one which constitutes a final anchorage for faith in the midst of perplexities and problems and difficulties which constantly confront the children of faith.

Man naturally resents the unknowable, and one of the chief characteristics of human history has been that of man's determination to unlock mystery, and fathom secrets. This is not wrong. It is right. I do not use the word "natural" in the sense in which we so often use it theologically, as describing the condition of fallen nature, but as proper to essential human nature. Quite apart from the fact of sin, it is a part of human nature as God created it that man everywhere rebels against mystery, and from childhood to the grave in every successive century sets himself to the business of attempting to unlock closed doors and to fathom hidden things. As soon as your child has begun to speak so that anyone can understand, he is making use of these words, I venture to say, almost more often than any other: Why? How? What? In the economy of God every child comes into the world a note of perpetual interrogation. Fathers and mothers, I charge you solemnly never say to your child, "Don't bother me." You are there to be bothered, and the whole system of Divine education is based upon the curiosity of a little child and answering its questions. I must not follow that line, interesting as it is. But it serves as an illustration at this point. The child is knocking at the closed door, is attempting to fathom secret. Curiosity is part and parcel of human nature, and apart from it the world would have made no discoveries, would have made no advancement. It is a natural principle in all human nature, and is God-implanted.

This rebellion against the unknowable on the part of man being, within certain bounds, perfectly correct, a part of a Divine purpose, where are the bounds and the limitations to be set? The bounds and the limits are fixed by man's ability to unlock doors and fathom secrets. Anything that a man

can discover he has a right to discover, and everything that man discovers is in the last analysis God's revelation to him as he persistently knocks and seeks and works. Every human discovery is a Divine revelation also. When men discovered the uses of electricity they did not create electricity; at the

fit time in human history God answered their persistent and patient search by revealing the great secret. The limits are set at the point where man can go no farther, and there are such limits. Every man who has given himself to thought and investigation along any line possible to the human mind has discovered a point of limitation.

A mistake man has made too often, and too constantly, and is making still, when he reaches the limit, is that of rebelling against the mystery that lies beyond it; or the more vital and deadly mistake of denying that there is anything beyond that which he is able to investigate and discover. It is against that twofold danger of man, in his asking of questions and making investigation, that man needs to guard. The words of this wonderful declaration of the Old Testament are fundamental and all-comprehensive. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Shall we first of all, then, examine the principle as declared, and, in the second place, make some illustrative application thereof which I trust and pray may be for the strengthening of our faith. Take out the two descriptive phrases of the text and look at them carefully, "The secret things," "The things that are revealed." They are not named in the order of our consciousness. We begin with the revealed thing, and discover that there lies behind it the secret thing. The writer here is beginning from the origin, from the cause, and working out to the effect. "The secret thing," "The revealed thing." For the purposes of following his argument we will reverse the order of consideration, and dwell first upon that which is second but which is first in our consciousness, "revealed things."

The Hebrew word here literally translated means things that are denuded, things that are made visible, things that can be seen, things that can be touched and felt, and appreciated by the senses, denuded things. If you keep that in mind for a moment you will see its bearing on that which follows,

Now I need not stay to argue that there are material things, which are obvious. There are mental things we are equally sure of. Poetry, music, philosophy are such. Moral things also we know perfectly well. There are revealed things in the moral and mental and material realms.

Then "secret things." That phrase is exactly the opposite of the other. These words might be translated clothed things, hidden things, things which are, but before which a covering is, so that we cannot see them, or touch them, or handle them, or weigh them. There is no doubt of their existence; but they are hidden, They exist, using the word in its deepest sense, but they are hidden, secret things.

Now let us take the declaration in the order in which it is made here. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." The thing secret to you is not secret to God. The thing that is so clothed that I cannot see it is "naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do." The revealed in the mental realm is the poem or the song, the philosophy or the book. The hidden thing is the process of thought that produces it. I have the poem, the song, the book; but listen to the old Psalmist, "Thou understandest my thought afar off," which does not mean that God is far away and understands my thought at that distant place. God is not far away; for "in Him we live and move and have our being." I cannot lift my hand save in God's energy. I may prostitute God's energy to sin; but I am atmosphered, homed, centred in God, and I cannot escape from Him. What, then, does the Psalmist mean? "Thou understandest my thought afar off," before it is a thought formed in my mind or expressed in my words. Before it becomes a poem or a philosophy, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." He knows the mystery of its genesis and watches the process of its exodus. Thou understandest thought in the making. The revealed thing is the book, the poem, the song. The hidden thing is the working of the mystery of the mind. The book, the poem, the song are mine. The mystery of the mental working is God's. The secret things are known to God. That is the fundamental rock. What an anchorage for faith when you and I once fasten on it for life! The problem that confronts me, and baffles me, does not baffle Him, The mystery that I am attempting to solve, and cannot yet, He knows. The secret things belong unto Him. This confidence keeps the heart firm and steady in the midst of tumult. Some of our fathers used to sing a hymn. One line comes to me,

Calm on tumult's wheel I sit.

The man who wrote that believed in God. Nobody else could write a line like that. The man who sits calm on tumult's wheel is the man who has the consciousness that over the tumult, around the tumult, knowing it, is the God of infinite peace, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God".

But now, I pray you, take the next declaration in order: "The revealed things belong unto us." The revealed things and the secret things are closely united. Every revealed thing is united to some secret thing that is hidden. The revealed things are one with secret and hidden forces, and the revealed things express so much of the hidden forces as we are able to know at the time. You may lay your hand where you will upon the commonplaces of life, and I tell you the commonplace thing you touch and see is but the outward and sacramental seal of something that will never be commonplace which you cannot touch and see. Christian Scientists are telling us that there is no matter: that everything is mind, that matter is but an expression of mind. And there is an element of truth in it. The absurdity of it I need not argue before an intelligent audience. Christian Science takes hold only where people have nothing else to do. It does not appeal to the average hard-headed Englishman. He has no room for it. Christian Science is characterized by ignorance of science and deficiency of Christianity; but it has elements of truth as has every heresy. When a Christian Scientist tells me that matter is not, it is all mind, what I say to him is this: No, this book is real matter, so are the signs of the music and the letters of the songs, but there is mind behind. This is dust and ashes until mind collects it, and binds, and prints upon it the music. Here is a revealed thing, and a secret thing, and every revealed thing is united to a secret thing. The greater is not the revealed thing but the secret thing that lies behind it.

Have you ever noticed that in our Lord's teaching He made use of figures and symbols, but never hinted that the figure was the fact. He always gives us to understand that, after all, the things seen are only symbols of something else. Let me give you an illustration. He says, "I am the true Vine." Now, we make a mistake if we say that Jesus borrowed the figure of the vine to teach us what He is. The deeper truth is this. God planted the vine in the world and let it grow through the centuries on the pattern of the infinite Christ. Man says, God has taken hold of my name, Father; He has borrowed the human name of Father in order that I may learn how loving He is. Nothing of the kind. God has lent you His name of Father that you may know how loving you ought to be. Do not let us begin at wrong end of things. Do not let us treat these things as though when we say bread we had said the real thing. Jesus "Bread that perisheth; I am the Bread of life." Every loaf of bread is a sacramental symbol. Learn this great truth, and every trailing vine of glory and beauty of vintage is an unveiling of the Son of God and His Church. You tell me the Cross is wooden. I tell you it is spiritual. You bring me to a Roman gibbet, and some of you have the rough, bloody, brutal Cross made out of gold to wear as an ornament - from which thing may God deliver us everywhere - and you say, This is the Cross of Salvation. No, no; it is not that. What is it? Sin lying across the heart of God and wounding Him. That is the Cross. The revealed Roman gibbet of nineteen hundred years ago is something more than men see and understand. Back of it is the secret thing, the infinite and unfathomable mystery. So that, according to this text, all revealed things are united to secret things, and every blade of grass is child of the infinite, and every painted flower by Divinity's fingers is the blossoming out of the essential beauty of God. Revealed things, secret things! The revealed things are ours. What for? To make us possessors of the secret things, to bring us into living touch with the secret things, with the God to whom the secret things belong.

Such is the principle declared. But there is a purpose in all this. What is the purpose? "That we may do all the words of this law." Leaving the local colouring and setting, and taking the principal thought, you find this great truth enunciated, that everything revealed is, if the man will think deeply enough and consider carefully enough, a revelation of law; and the moment a man discovers the law in the revealed thing, and obeys it, he touches and enters into communion with the secret thing behind it. How better can I illustrate at this point than by referring again to that to which I have already referred? Electricity. How is this building lighted tonight? We say by electric light. But how did we get it? It has been developed. But do you know how you developed it? Are you quite sure that in ten years electricians will not laugh at the word developed? That is only a passing word; but it shows us our ignorance. But what do we know? There were revealed things to men who were watching, results accidentally at first, flashing out upon the imagination of the watcher. What did the watcher do? He set himself to discover the law that operated behind the revelation, discovering and obeying which, he found himself in the midst of forces of which man had never dreamed. If I were to say casually to a boy, as though I were trying to catch him, "My boy, tell me, where is there more electricity, in London or in the heart of Africa?" he might be inclined to say, "Oh, London." But it is not so, and you know it is not so. There is no more electricity here in London than there is in the of Africa; but here in London we light our buildings, our machinery, flash our messages. In Africa they do none of these things. Why not? Here we have discovered law, and, obeying it, harness the force, though we cannot understand it. In Africa they have never discovered the law, and the force wraps them about, and they make no use of it. The revealed thing has a law. Obey the law of the revealed thing, and immediately you touch the infinite force behind it.

That is the philosophy of prayer. You tell me today I cannot pray, that God is too much a slave of the universe He made, that He cannot hear me. God is revealing Himself in bird, in storm, in sky, in man, and in movements. Watch, and you will discover a law in everything. Obey it, and you will come immediately into touch with the Infinite Force behind, and you will work miracles; not the miracle of the juggler who amuses a crowd. You must discover the law in the revealed thing; obey it, and you can harness the forces that are infinite to the chariot wheels of your own progress.

Now let us pass to some illustrative applications, beginning among the minor matters and proceeding to the highest. I will begin with the flowers. I take a flower in my hand, and I look at it. There are revealed things. What are they? Form, and colour, and fragrance. Are there no secret things here? I need not argue. No scientist, and no botanist, nor any of us has ever yet been able to tell me why the petals of yon chrysanthemum are of that particular tint, or by what strange alchemy things there yellow are here red; why the carbon is but jellyfish there and diamond yonder. Did you think of leaving the Church because of mystery? There is as much mystery in that hymn-book as in all theology, and you had better find your way out of the world as quickly as possible, and even then you will find yourself in the home of mystery. Secret things in the flower! It is impossible to take the illustration without recalling that exquisite little fragment of Tennyson's:

Flower in the crannied wall,

I pluck you out of the crannies;

I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,

Little flower - but if I could understand

What you are, root and all, and all in all,

I should know what God and man is.

That is poetic and beautiful in the language of the dead century; but the great flaming principle Moses wrote long before Tennyson wrote it. How did he write it? "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, the revealed things are for us and our children." Discover the law that lies within the flower, and obey it, and what will happen? The secret will reach you through your obedience, and you will be able presently to work with God in making the old-fashioned garden chrysanthemum into the gorgeous beauty of the flower of today. A secret thing, a revelation of a law; a man obeys it, and he is a fellow worker with God in the cultivation of flowers.

Let me move to another realm, and here borrow the words of my Lord Himself in another connection. "The wind bloweth," the revealed thing. "Thou hearest the "sound," the revealed thing. The revealed thing in the wind belongs to me. What is it? Sound, strength. The secret thing belongs to God. What is it? "Whence, whither?" Find the law that lies within the wind. What then? Then, that law discovered and obeyed, the wind becomes the messenger of health and of motion; and men will now draw you charts and maps showing you the directions and currents, which are all true; but never forget this, that God still holds in love wisdom the hidden secret of the wind.

The mind of man. What do you know about the mind of man? Capacity, the necessity for training, the great possibilities of mind when properly trained. What do we not know about the mind? Now hear me and be patient if you do not agree with me. We do not know its nature. We do not know its seat. The whole trend of scientific investigation is along that line at this moment. The age of the physical scientist has given way to the age of the psychological scientist, and as yet they have told us nothing about the seat of the mind. You tell me about brain cells and gray matter. Perhaps! Do you think I am very ignorant? It is because I am not sure. I am a great agnostic in some things. Even if you speak of gray matter and brain cells you do not really think that is all there is of mind. I know men who still have brain cells but no mind! I am still inclined to believe that mind continues when brain cells be dust and ashes. The brain cells may be a medium for today but there is nothing final about them. Let us say we do not know. Let us say the secret things belong to God, Yet discover the law in the revealed thing, and obey it, and you are coming near to the secret thing. And I for one welcome the psychological movement. It is infinitely broader and sweeter and healthier than the dust of thirty years ago; and men obeying law are emerging into new light.

And now, very reverently let me lift this to the highest plane of all. The Christ Himself. Revealed things. Yes. The historic Person, the Actual Presence in every successive century. Do you question it? I cannot stay to argue it; but I do say that it admits of no questioning. I say to you that the direct presence of Jesus of Nazareth in the world is established without possibility of doubt; and even those questioning the accuracy of our New Testament records at least have to make acknowledgment that there has been a Man named Jesus Who did some things, and said some things which affect this hour. That is all I want. That is the fact. No brilliant Frenchman, or lucid German, or hard-thinking Englishman, has been able to take from us the fact of the historicity of Christ. That is the smallest revealed thing. What is the greater revealed thing? The living Christ, the living message through the centuries, the living Christ in England, doing what none other can do, accomplishing what no philosophy was ever able to do, and no system of education can do. The living Christ, Who passes into the slum, and takes hold of your unfit man, and makes him fit. And while you deny His existence, I show you His miracles; and if you are as honest as the Sadducees you will hold your peace. The revealed things. Thank God I am not speaking of a dead and worn-out Christ. Men and women here who a month ago had not seen the vision have seen it. Men and women who a month ago were in the grip of sin have on their faces tonight the very radiance of heaven's own light and the reflection of the Christ beauty. Revealed things. But there are secret things. What are they? These are some: the method of Incarnation, the mystery of Atonement, the method of Resurrection. Doubt, and doubt very earnestly, any man who tells you these things are not secret things, any man who attempts to formulate, or tabulate, who attempts to tell you of the humanity and Deity of Christ where the one ends and the other begins. He was very God and very Man. Very Man, weeping, tired, weary, tempted. Very God, hushing tempests, casting demons out, healing disease, remaking moral failures. Do I understand Him? I do not. I worship Him, and I say in His presence, "My Lord, and my God." I cannot touch the secret things of the infinite Christ save through the revealed things; but if I will obey the law revealed in Christ I shall come into living touch with the infinite mysteries that lie behind, and Incarnation will bring me into relationship with God; and Atonement will cancel my sin and break its power, and Resurrection will be to me the new enablement for which my weary soul has waited.

And reverently, from this great height, let us descend the mountain again, and let me say to you that God's government of human affairs also has within it these two elements. What are the revealed things? The fact that God is governing. Do we ever see this quite clearly at the moment? I am not sure; I think some do, but I think it is always by faith granted to us. Look back over human history, and if you and I are wise, in the day of densest darkness in history, we shall see God is on the field when He is most invisible. Illustrations crowd upon me. Look out for yourselves at the coincidence of the invention of the printing machine and the Reformation of religion. But you say, Where is God now? God is governing, and the secret things in His government belong to Him.

Let me get from these wide reaches of vision, and take my own life. How do I know God is governing in my life? I look back - and my friends will forgive me - I am not looking back as far as some of you; but I look back and I pick out things tonight, things I cannot speak of, days of my life, dark days; for, as God is my witness, He has given me my share of sorrow's sacrament, days of awful heartbreak, when all the lights along the shore seemed to go out. I would not undo one such day for worlds. I have come at last to see the meaning of them. There seems to be a jumble, when a man is laying the pavement with little bits of blue, and gray, and black, and sand and mortar. But when the building is finished, behold the mosaic. There would have been no mosaic if there had been no apparent jumble in the construction. Already some of the mosaic is shining out for me, and when I have done and passed home, then I shall sing of all the pathway.

Right was the pathway leading to this.

Though it was through blood and tears and suffering.

And so I might go on. Is your experience just now one of sorrow? I am talking to some sorrowing heart, some broken heart. Let me leave everybody else, and talk to you. Is the day very dark, and the way very rough? I cannot understand it. Secret things belong to God. Discover the law that lies within the revealed thing; if it be pain it will be the law of lying plastic even though the hand of the Potter press to pain the clay; and presently out of the process and the ordeal shall come the vessel finished to His glory - a thing of use to God, and of beauty for the infinite ages. May God help us if we forget all the attempts to illustrate, to fasten our faith upon, the great declaration, The secret things are God's as the revealed things are ours.