**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 10 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**LIGHT AND DARKNESS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

*John 1:4*

THE TEXT CONSISTS OF TWO STATEMENTS:

First, "In Him was life."

Second, "The life was the light of men."

These are related to a group of ten, with opens his writing:

"In the beginning was the Word."

"The Word was with God."

"The Word was God."

"The same was in the beginning with God."

"All things were made by Him."

"Without Him was not anything made that hath been made."

"In Him was life."

"The life was the light of men."

"The light shineth in darkness."

"The darkness apprehended it not."

These are not arguments, but affirmations. I do not propose to discuss them, but to proceed on the assumption that they are true.

In the two which I have selected two principal values arrest the attention: first, the Person referred to, and second, the proclamation.

As to the Person referred to, the first demand on honesty is that we should interpret the writer's reference by his own presentation. By that I do not mean that we begin at the mystic distance where he begins. The inclusion of that will be necessary ere we have done with the writing. At first it is enough that we recognize the Person as those who saw Him, who were, in company with the writer, familiar with Him.

This Person, then, is first named in the account of the ministry of John the Baptist, in which the writer . declares, "On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This in itself is an interesting introduction, revealing as it does the human personality - "Jesus"; the Divine relation - "the Lamb of God"; and the avowed mission - "which taketh away the sin of the world."

Adhering closely to the simplest method of observation, this Person is seen as a Man of natural thought, and speech, and habit; Who in the course of His public ministry wrought signs of a supernatural order, and uttered words of stupendous meaning; and Who was brutally murdered, but by resurrection from the dead gave the company of His disciples a new understanding of the meaning of His life and of the nature of His death.

It is perfectly evident that the wonder of that resurrection gave the writer a new conception of the Person, and the prologue of his treatise is assuredly the result of his certainty of that fact.

This leads us to the proclamation of our text. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The demonstration of the first of these was the resurrection. By that it was made certain that in some way Jesus had the power of an endless life. Being so demonstrated, the proclamation is in itself the most stupendous of claims, and can be interpreted only by what has preceded it; that He was the Creator, of which claim it is undoubtedly part, and the final and inclusive affirmation.

The second proclamation reveals the application of this supreme truth to the case of man as the crowning glory of creation. Presently the writer, with his gaze fixed on the Person as visible to the eyes of men, said of Him, "There was the true Light, which lighteth every man, coming into the world." By that affirmation he declares that every man has light, that light being the peculiar and distinguishing quality in human life, separating it from all lower forms. In the Person under observation this universally present light came into visibility.

In order to comprehend the light, the whole Person as presented must be seen, and that can be done only as He is observed in all the activities of His life and death as interpreted by His resurrection.

That revelation is unique, stupendous, overwhelming, and affords the one and only explanation of the missionary enterprise of the Church. In the early days of clear, if imperfect, vision, the Church was missionary. Every new unveiling of Christ has been the occasion of new missionary devotion. A supreme illustration is that of the Evangelical Revival, in which the London Missionary Society and nearly all the other great Societies now at work were born. Today we are in the midst of a process not unmixed with conflict, out of which is coming a yet clearer and more spacious conception of this light, and new missionary enthusiasm and activity are already manifesting themselves.

May we then in reverence, and yet with confidence, attempt to see in broadest outlines the missionary enterprise as explained by this Person and this proclamation?

I propose three lines of consideration of that enterprise as interpreted by the light of the Person of Jesus: -

First, the fundamental conceptions; the ideal - Righteousness.

Second, the impelling motives; the actual - Sin.

Third, the commanding evangel; the possible - Salvation.

1

We begin with the fundamental conceptions of the missionary enterprise. These are created by the light Christ has given us concerning God, and man, and the law of the universe. They may be briefly summarized as conceptions of the unity of God, of the unity of humanity, and of the unity of law. Each of these deserves attention in turn. However, let it be recognized at once that simple and self-evident as these things appear to us to-day, they are so as the result of Christ's revelation, and of His revelation only. In the Hebrew religion there had been insistence on the idea of the unity of God. Its foundation word was, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one," Yet the mass of the people had been slow to learn the lesson, as a study of their history reveals. The idea of one humanity was totally foreign to humanity, for Judaism had emphasized separation rather than unity. The unity of law was unknown, as is evidenced by the fact that the interpreters of the highest system of law known had divided as between less and greater laws.

As the result of the light which came by Jesus, we now know the one living and eternal God. We know Him as transcendent, that is, as being infinitely greater than any creature or the sum total of creation. We know Him as immanent, that is, as being near to, and interested in every creature, and the sum total of creation. We know Him as operative, that is, as actually working through all history and all life toward a "far-off Divine event."

This conception of the unity of God has been at once the grandest and most gracious possible. We have not yet discovered all its meaning. Its acceptance has always meant the cancelling of terms which, apart from it, are in constant use. To believe it is to cease to know great and small as opposed or unlike; for the smallest is kin of the greatest, and the greatest is co-operative with the smallest. The near and the distant are no longer far removed, for all are held in one consciousness, and upheld by one power. The high and the low are not opposite, and antagonistic; but related parts of the one whole, which lives and moves and has its being in God.

This vision of God is the rock foundation of the thought of those who have come to know Him through Christ.

Closely related to this conception is the conception of humanity which has resulted from the light of the Person of Christ. There is no subject more full of fascination than that of the universality of Jesus. In humanity, apart from Him, different races have had different qualities, and different nations different ideals. In Him all peoples have found the finest fulfilment of all that was best in their peculiar qualities and ideals. Thus, in the very simplicity of His humanity He has brought to light the underlying unity of the race. In Him all the separated notes merge into the one perfect harmony, and therefore in Him there cannot be Jew or Gentile, bond or free. The Man of Nazareth has become the rallying centre of men of all races, and thus we have come to recognize that beneath all diversities of race or colour or position, humanity is of one blood and one spirit.

This conception of the unity of humanity is awe-inspiring in itself, and in its creation of human interrelationship is most remarkable. To believe it is to be forever unable to be patriotic with the patriotism that thinks only of one's own country; or parochial with the parochialism which has no fellowship with the next parish. It is to see in every man and woman a blood relation, however far they may be separated from us by distance, or temperament, or position. It is to feel a new joy in the infinite variety which is, after all, but the evidence of the richness of the underlying unity.

These two conceptions create a third, which the light given by Christ does moreover directly reveal, that, namely, of the unity of law. To grant that unity is at once to recognize law as being love-inspired. There is no other motive for law which holds within itself all the qualities which make for the present realization of order among the members of the one humanity under the government of the one God. This unifying inspiration of law was, moreover, the supreme fact revealed by Christ. His message was delivered, in the figurative language of John, from "the bosom of the Father," and His summary of the true and all-sufficient law of human life was, "Thou shalt love."

This law of love is the severest possible; that is to say, its requirements are most minute and mighty. It can never deny itself by allowing activity which harms and hurts to continue. It makes the standard of action, not what weak and incomplete things are able to enforce in a struggle against strong and complete things; but what strong and complete things are able to do, to ensure the strengthening and perfecting of the weakest and most incomplete. Therefore this law of love is, in its keeping, the condition of perfect joy. Love ever finds its greatest delight in the well-being of all. The mightiest find greatest joy in the measure in which, in love, they care for and make joyful those who are weaker. The weakest find chief joy in the gladness they give to those who in love help them when in love's response to love they gain strength.

All this is but to touch in barest and roughest outline on the great conceptions created by Christ. The application in detail must be left. Nevertheless, these are the fundamental conceptions of the missionary enterprise. They create an impulse which is irresistible under certain conditions. Those conditions are next to be looked at. It is well to remember that these conceptions do not in themselves call for missionary activity. These are the facts of the ultimate order, of heaven set up on earth. When that final goal is reached, missions will cease. The triumphs of Christianity constitute the measure in which missionary operations cease, because these conceptions are realized. The difference between darkness and light is the difference between ignorance of these truths and life lived in obedience to them. When these conceptions have won their ultimate victory in human history our missionary activity will be at an end. Until that hour come, they constitute the deepest reason, and create the most abiding passion for missions.

2

We now turn to the impelling motives of missionary enterprise. These result from that consciousness of the existing darkness, created by the epiphany of light. The apostolic outlook, as revealed in the New Testament writings, was characterized by an almost overwhelming sense of the darkness in which men lived, apart from Christ. Paul wrote of "the works of darkness," "the hidden things of darkness, "the world rulers of this darkness, the power of darkness." Peter affirmed that the elect race was called "out of darkness" John declared of the loveless man, "The darkness hath blinded his eyes." These men having seen the light were made conscious of the conditions in the midst of which they lived. The contrast was sharp and appalling. Their joy in the light created their agony in the presence of the darkness. Their absolute rest in the perfection of the ideal order was the inspiration of their ceaseless unrest in the midst of the chaos. Thus it has ever been, and thus it continues to be. To walk in the light is to know the darkness. Conditions which are eminently satisfactory to those who have never seen the light are appalling, heart-breaking, disastrous, to the children of light.

The darkness may best be described by contrast with the light. In Christ we have found the One God. In the world we find humanity living without God, having lost its vision of Him. In Christ we have discovered the oneness of humanity. In the world we find humanity broken up and in perpetual conflict. In Christ the one law of love is revealed. In the world we see the mastery of selfishness producing suffering everywhere.

That humanity has lost its vision of God is demonstrated as we watch it at its worship. That there is a light, lighting every man, is evidenced by the fact that the instinct for worship is universal. No human being has been found so degraded that the sense of forces outside the material is wholly absent. We may speak of superstition, and barbarism, but the man with a fetish does by his thought of it demonstrate this sense of the spiritual, and recognize some relation to it. Yet how awfully the light that is in him is darkness. The highest conceptions of God, when held in the light of His manifestation in Christ, are dark indeed. They postulate a being, or a number of beings, hard, cold, distant, relentless, capricious, Descending in the scale, gods of selfishness, of greed, of corrupt, and degrading passions are worshiped, until at last the conception of deity is that of antagonistic devils, who are worshiped by being persuaded not to hurt. Darkness in very deed, but we have come to know it only because we have seen the light.

This lost vision of God has produced everywhere the break-up of humanity. We have already referred to the fundamental word of ideal Hebraism as being, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one." The immediate outcome of that declaration was the command, "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This is significant in that it suggests that the recognition of One God makes for the unification of every individual life by the one law of love, and thus makes possible the true social order. The words of the Preacher, "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint, " are demonstrated true in all human history. All anarchy is the outcome of atheism. National strife and blood-shed, social conflict and cruelty, individual bitterness and brutality, alike result from lack of the knowledge of God, which is life and not death, light and not darkness, love and not hatred. Yet these are the conditions in which the greater part of men are still living.

The absence of love as the law of life issues in the mastery of selfishness, and this is the secret of all individual sin, and the source of all the woes and wounds and weariness of the peoples.

That these are the conditions we need not stay to argue. Eyes lifted from the contemplation of the Light of the World, in which have been seen the facts of the unity of God, the oneness of humanity, and the perfection of the law of love, and turned to the great lands in which the families of the earth are dwelling, see with awful distinctness the darkness of the lost vision of God, of the consequent tearing and agony of humanity, and of the cruel and blasting tyranny of the mastery of selfishness.

It is this vision of the darkness as seen by the light which is the impelling motive of missionary enterprise, consuming, and driving like a fire in its almost terrific passion for the passing of the darkness and the victory of the light.

Yet we have not so far found the real secret of the victories won, or the most compelling cause for continued toil. The case is hopeless indeed if there be nothing more to be said. The problems are but suggested by the vision of the ideal, and the consciousness of the actual. How is the actual to be changed into the ideal? That is the supreme question, and all missionary endeavour has been the result of the possession by the Church of the one and only answer. To that we finally turn.

3

The superlative factor in missionary enterprise is its great evangel. That evangel is infinitely more than a revelation of truth about God and man. It is the declaration of an activity of God which is in harmony with His nature, and through which man, notwithstanding his failure, may be restored so completely that all the highest ideals revealed in the Person of the Christ may be perfectly realized. As we said at the commencement, the light of men which came into the world with the coming of Jesus needs the whole of His life and mission through death, if it is to be perfectly understood.

The perfect ideal is not the complete evangel. Indeed, in itself it is not an evangel. It is a glorious presentation of the magnificent and beneficent purpose of God; but if the only light is that of such revelation, then man learns from it only how far he is falling short. But when there is superadded to that unveiling of an ideal the story - awe-inspiring and full of mystery - of a death which is the ultimate of all human woe and anguish, which, nevertheless, merges in a resurrection of unquestioned triumph; and in the claim of the risen One to all authority in heaven and on earth, and in His command to His disciples to proclaim the evangel, then hope springs in the heart, for we realize that through that Person a work has been wrought which makes possible the correction of the false and the establishment of the true.

The truth is the great deposit of the Church, possessing which, she is in debt to every land, and people, and age, until hearing and obeying, the darkness pass and the perfect light of the true order is the brightness and joy of human life in its individual, social, national, and racial experience. Every land where His light is unknown is a reproach to the Church. All the peoples who, sitting in darkness, still sin and suffer, are by their sinning and suffering calling to the children of light to be honest and pay the debt they owe.

May we, then, reverently inquire what are the essential notes of this great evangel? In attempting to name them I shall studiously avoid making any statement in the realm of those unfathomed secrets of the methods of God which are forever beyond human understanding. The things revealed are for us and our children.

Taking, then, the whole fact of the Christ - His Being, His teaching, His death, and His resurrection - we find that three declarations constitute the evangel. It may be well, first, to state them in all brevity. They are:

First, that God cannot deny Himself, and therefore obeys His own law of love at infinite and amazing cost.

Second, that humanity must return to that same law by accepting the grace provided at such cost.

Third, that because of God's action, wherever man makes such return the past can be blotted out, and the highest and most glorious ideal be fully realized.

I am almost painfully aware of how each of these assertions opens the way for very much elaboration, and nothing would be more delightful than to be able to carry it out. That is, however, made impossible by the fact that we are still straitened by the limitations of time. Moreover, it is not absolutely necessary to the present intention, which is that of examination of a great theme in broadest outline. We must content ourselves therefore for the moment with a few brief sentences in each case.

As to the first. By incarnation God did not actually come nearer to man. Neither was the death of Jesus of Nazareth a point of new departure on the part of God. Incarnation was the method by which God revealed to men who had lost their vision of Him the fact of His perpetual nearness, and the nature of His Being. By the death of Jesus of Nazareth He wrought out into visibility, so far as that was possible, an attitude of His nature, and an activity of His grace, whereby, and alone whereby, man could be saved. The eternal and still finally incomprehensible facts are those of the existence and nature of God, and of that suffering of the infinite Love, whereby the very guilt of sin is cancelled, and its power broken. In order to have right relation with these facts it was necessary that they should be manifested, and therefore the life and death of Jesus were necessary. The first note of the Gospel is the absolute certainty that God can and does forgive sin and break its power.

As to the second. The messenger of the evangel must ever be true to the statement of necessity on the part of those to whom the message is delivered. He cannot be true to the message of the Divine pain if he tells men that sin does not matter, or that it is merely part of a process toward its opposite. He forever declares that it is all wrong, and that its ultimate is the distance and the disaster which its direction indicates. The conditions of restoration are those of return to obedience. Here, however, is the matchless beauty and surpassing loveliness of our evangel. God has made the method of return to His law that of accepting as a gift of His grace the forgiveness of sins, and all the resources necessary to the remaking of the broken life. That gift of grace is not a cloak for sin, but a cleansing from it, not an excuse for unfitness, but an energy for fitness. To refuse it is to choose sin and ruin. Thus if the first note of the evangel be that of the grace of God, the second is ever that of the responsibility of man.

As to the third. Far be it from me to seem, by any words now to be uttered, to minimize the value and importance of the things already spoken. They are the profoundest and mightiest, the things rooted in God, and thrilling with His power. Yet this last note is so full of delight that in it one exults, and is constrained to perpetual song. Because of God's action in grace, wherever man obeys, the best can be realized in spite of all the worst.

In the return of man to God through Christ the true God is known, and all the false ones are swept away. It is when God is so found that every wily and sinful Ephraim exclaims, "What have I to do any more with idols?" When man sees the one Lord, and exercises in Him the one faith of submission, and is baptized into life and light and love by the one Spirit, he finds the one God and Father of all, Who is over all, transcendent; and through all, operative; and in all, immanent. In that moment he finds the one humanity, and in that moment self is smitten to the death, and love enthroned. Then begins the healing. Bitterness passes from the heart like a pestilential vapour driven forth before the rush of the wind from the snow-capped mountains. Round the new centre of love-governed life all the circles of family, of society, of nation, and of race feel the thrill: and hastened is the day of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is our evangel. Its notes are Love, the love of God; Faith, the answer of man; Hope, the certainty of victory. This evangel is not parochial, national. It is Divine, and therefore humane, and wherever it is pro- claimed man finds it in very deed the one and only Gospel.

Brethren, my theme is inexhaustible, but my time is not. Those of you who know the Light most perfectly are most conscious of how human expositions of it are ever in danger of dimming its effulgence. For that in this message which has obscured the one Light of life I most sincerely pray the pardon of my gracious Lord. But if in any measure I have been able to speak, so as to be understood, the things that are deepest and most awe-inspiring in my own life, I thank God. Let us remember at least the great text, and so much of the suggestions made as will help us to clearer understanding of the unique and lonely splendor of our evangel.

In Christ to have found God, and man, and the law of Love, is to have become awfully conscious of the gross darkness that covers the people.

In Christ to have found the grace of God, the way of human salvation, and the assurance of the ultimate victory of Love is to be filled with a passing for the proclamation of the glad good news to all lands and peoples for the glory of God, the healing of man, and the establishment of the Kingdom.

The Vision creates the passion; the passion compels the mission. If we lack missionary devotion it is because we lack passion, and if we lack passion it is because we lack vision.