**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 05 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**RIGHTEOUSNESS OR REVENUE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

*Matthew 6:24*

THESE WORDS OCCUR IN THAT PART OF THE MANIFESTO OF Jesus in which, after enunciating His laws for the government of human life, both in its human and Divine relationships, He declared the necessity for a super-earthly consciousness in dealing with all the things of the earth.

You will at once recognize that the paragraph which I read to you this evening, beginning with His charge, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," is a paragraph bringing those who listen to the King face to face with the truth upon which He perpetually insisted, that it is impossible to live the earthly life as it ought to be lived unless there is an abiding consciousness of things above and beyond the earth.

In the course of this particular instruction, He warned His disciples and all the subjects of His Kingdom against two perils, those of covetousness and of care; the two opposites, the desire to possess, and the anxiety lest not enough may be possessed to meet the bare necessities of life. His charge against covetousness closed with these words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." They are emphatic, clear, and final, and constitute one of those brief declarations of which it is almost impossible to miss the meaning, unless we come to the text with prejudice, and desire to read into it things that are not in it, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This evening I propose, first, an examination of these words of Jesus; and secondly, an immediate application of them.

First, then, let us take the statement itself, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Three words arrest our attention; the emphatic words around which all the rest are grouped, and to which the rest do but serve as connecting links to create the declaration. The three words are God, mammon, serve.

Because it is always necessary to get back to the simplest and most elemental things in our study of the words which fell from the lips of Jesus, I am going to ask you to take these words one by one, and examine them, before we consider the declaration. Let us for the moment put the whole declaration out of mind; we will come back to it, for the text is the message of the evening. In order that we may return to the declaration and consider it, let us then look at the words God, mammon, serve. If I am to understand this declaration of Jesus, I must seek to find out what He meant by God, what He meant by mammon, and what He meant when He used the word serve.

This is a very large inquiry, and one to which for a perfect answer it would be necessary to take the whole scheme of His teaching as you find it in the gospel narratives. I suggest to you that we take another method in order to answer the inquiry, which I think will be perfectly fair. In the whole of this Manifesto what conception of God is manifest?

Mark carefully this thing. He neither argued for the existence of God, nor attempted to define the mystery of the Divine nature. So fat as the teaching of Jesus is concerned, we are left without anything in the nature of definition. He came and exercised His ministry, taking God for granted, never occupying one single half-hour in defending the doctrine of His existence, or in defining the nature of His Being. Therefore, if I would know what He meant by God I must listen for the incidental things, and must pay attention to the underlying conceptions which manifest themselves through those incidental references. In order to find these, I read again this Manifesto of the King, going through it merely to take out of it the direct, immediate references to God which occurred in the course of its deliverance. With what result? The reference is in the fifth chapter and the eighth verse, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The next is in the ninth verse, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God." The next are in the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth verses of the same chapter, "Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet." In the forty-fifth verse, "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In the forty-eighth verse, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Then I read through chapter six and I find these references, "Your Father Who is in, heaven," "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "Thy Father Who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "Behold the birds of the heaven … your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." These are the references He made to God, never arguing for His existence, never defining His being, but, incidentally, referring to Him.

From these I discover a God of essential purity, the pure in heart shall see Him; a God Who is a God of peace, the peacemakers are His children; a God Who is a God of authority, supremacy, power; heaven is His throne, the earth His footstool; a God Who governs in all things in the material world, and is in that sense a God of providence, making His sun to shine, sending His rain; a God of perfection, "as your heavenly Father is perfect"; a God rewarding men, recompensing men in the sense in which the great word appears in Hebrews, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him"; a God of infinite resources, caring for the birds, clothing the flowers, giving food and raiment to all who put their trust in Him. This is not exhaustive, it is only suggestive. If we let the sublime and glorious thought of God, which evidently filled the soul of Jesus, break upon our consciousness as the result of these incidental allusions, we shall see what He meant when He said "God."

Turn to the next word, mammon. The word represents wealth, material possessions not necessarily in particular quantity, but the fact of them, material things. The only place in which the word occurs in the New Testament is here in the Manifesto, and once when Christ, speaking of material wealth, said, "Make to yourselves friends by means of mammon the of unrighteousness; that, when it" - the mammon - "shall fail, they" - the friends - "may receive you into the eternal habitations." What then is mammon? What is mammon according to the conception of Jesus? Something about which men should never be anxious. Something which God knows men must have. Something which God promises He will add in the proper measure and proportion to men according to their need, "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Something which a man may so use as to transmute it into infinite possession in the land of life which lies beyond. The word suggests material possessions, nothing inherently evil, and nothing necessarily improper.

I turn to the third word, serve, which need not occupy us above one minute to understand. To serve as does a slave, for the word is one that suggests bond slavery. Its root suggestion is, to be bound by. The inter-related word in the text is master. "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is a word which suggests the supremacy of another; the idea is that of being mastered, and of yielding supreme obedience.

My own conviction is that my task is now really accomplished, that every man and woman can come to this simple statement and see its true impact and discover its true meaning, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This is not a comparison of equal forces in opposition to each other. Jesus is not putting God on that side and mammon on the other as necessarily antagonistic. Had this text said, Ye cannot serve God and the devil, it would have been quite another thing. I am not saying that that is not true, but that is not the text. The underlying thought, the suggestiveness, the philosophy of the text is not the same as it would be under such circumstances. Jesus is not putting God and mammon necessarily into opposition. Everything that mammon connotes is in the Kingdom of God. It has its place in the fulfilment of His purpose. He knows man's need of material things. He will add to man the things he needs. Mammon can be the means to the highest ends. It is possible for man by means of mammon to make friends who will receive him into age-abiding habitations. There is nothing inherently evil in it. The tragedy suggested is not that of man standing between two forces that are forever in opposition, choosing which he will serve. Mammon is simply non-moral. Lay your hand upon a coin, I care not what the coin, a sovereign or a copper, and think with me. That coin is non-moral. There is no inherent evil in it. There is no inherent good in it. The questions of right and wrong lie wholly in the spiritual nature of man, and mammon is affected thereby. You can take that coin and put it to such base uses that it will damn you. You can take that coin and put it to such good uses that it will make you richer forever and ever.

Christ does suggest two possibilities which are in opposition. The one, that man can serve mammon. The other, that he can serve God. What is it to serve God? To be His bond-slave, yielding all to His absolute supremacy. The abandonment of everything to which the name of God connotes, purity, peace, and all those other facts of which we spoke. That is a possibility for every man and nation. There is the other possibility, to serve mammon. To be the bond-slave of material possessions, and every poor man can be that; to yield wholly to the sway of the things which are only material; the abandonment of the life to husks. Jesus declared the possibilities to be mutually exclusive. To serve God and be His bond-slave. To serve mammon and be its bond-slave. To serve God is to command mammon, not to serve it. To be wholly yielded to God is to be the master of all material things, not to be bound in slavery thereto. To state the case from the other side. To serve mammon - to live saying only, What shall I eat, what shall I drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed, and how shall I possess these things, is to dethrone God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Take two illustrations. First, an individual one. Here is a man standing at the parting of the ways, facing a moral crises. He knows perfectly well that two ways are stretching out from the point where he stands. He knows perfectly well that he is at a moral crisis in his life. What are these two ways? There is the way of temporal advantage, and there is the way eternal advantage. These things are not always, necessarily, forever antagonistic to each other, but the hour comes in which they are in opposition. Which will the man do? That is hour of crisis. We leave him at that point.

Take another illustration, a national one. The hour has come in the history of a nation when two ways lie out before her; one is the way of righteousness. Let us abbreviate the word and make its impact greater, rightness. Let us further abbreviate the word, the way of right. What is the other way? The way of revenue. These two things are not altogether, always antagonistic. They are not necessarily in conflict. There is a way of revenue which is the way of righteousness. There is a way of righteousness which is the way of revenue. But the hour comes in the history of a nation when these two are in opposition. There is the crisis. That is an hour of destiny for the nation because it is the hour of crisis.

Take your two illustrations again and let me say a second thing. We have seen the crisis, mark the choices. I see a man standing at a moral crisis, at a place where two ways meet, the way of temporal advantage and the other way of eternal advantage. I say to that man, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Which will you serve? I say to the nation, as the nation stands at the parting of the ways, when the hour has come that she must decide between righteousness and revenue, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Which will you serve?

I go back to the individual in the place of crisis, in the place of choice, and I now look for the consummation. He says, "I will seek first the Kingdom of God." Then all the things which are necessary to him will be added unto him. In that hour, when he has made God supreme, he has come to mastery over mammon.

I go back to the nation and watch her as she makes her choice. I inquire what the consummation will be. I see the nation decide that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," and make her choice to do right at all costs, and I see that nation never lacking the revenue necessary for the maintenance of her moral integrity and abiding strength. "All these things shall be added unto you."

You will notice there are no neutral tints in this sermon. I stand here tonight first, always first, so help me God, as a minister of Jesus Christ, but I stand here as an Englishman. It is time that we have done with neutral tints, and that we come back again to the clear dividing lines of Jesus Christ. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." You say, Is there not such a thing as policy? The Church has nothing to do with it. The Church of God must stand in every hour of crisis by the side of the individual man, in the presence of the nation, insisting upon the hard, clear, sharp, beneficent dividing lines which the Christ of God creates; to the right or to the left, life or death, light or darkness, heaven or hell, for the man or for the nation. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

What is the application? You will find in the pews a pamphlet scattered broadcast. My only regret is that I was unable to secure enough to be sure that every man and woman would go home with that pamphlet in their hands at the close of this service. I want those of you who are interested and can lay hands upon one to take it home and read it. That is the second part of my sermon. I cannot pause to read it, neither is it necessary that I should. It is from the pen of a man for whom we all thank God, Mr. Arnold Foster, one of our missionaries in China.

Tomorrow a conference will meet in Shanghai. How many of us know of it? Does the Christian Church in England know of it? I have seen some incidental references to it, some few things said concerning it in the religious press. I have seen more in what men call the secular press than in the religious. The Church of God is asleep about this matter. What was the genesis of that Conference? The answer is in the pamphlet on pages five and six. There Mr. Arnold Foster tells us that this Conference is the outcome of an approach made by the United States Government. What is the constitution of the Conference? Twelve nations are to be represented, China, Japan, Siam, Persia, Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Holland, Portugal and the United States of America, For what are they gathering in Shanghai? The answer is given in the pamphlet. To consider, "The character of the opium habit as a habit. The results of opium on the Chinese as nation. The volume of the trade, its sources of supply, and the rights of the traders." That is very technical. I do not profess to understand diplomacy or policy. All these things are very necessary I suppose. It is necessary that our Government should send these commissioners. I am profoundly thankful she has consented to do so and that they have gone.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the whole thing is a farce. We know perfectly well what the opium habit has done for China. We know perfectly well that the blame and shame is on us. If there were such a thing as a national conscience that was worth anything, we should blush to remember that America had to ask us if we would not consider this problem.

Well, the Conference is to meet. Its object is thus stated, "Suggestions of measures which the respective governments may adopt for the gradual suppression of opium cultivation, traffic, and use within the Eastern possessions, thus assisting China in her purpose of eradicating the evil from the Empire." I quote from the communication sent out to diplomatic agents by the United States State Department.

England has twice declared, through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled, that the opium traffic is "morally indefensible." Since doing so, within the last two years, the Government has steadily resisted China's own efforts to rid herself of it. It is said that we must proceed slowly, that there is the need of policy. I know nothing about policy, I face the facts. I stand in the presence of China's undoing, and I can hardly speak of this thing as I feel it. I know perfectly well that some people will say, the preacher was in danger of getting excited. I am terribly in danger of it. I can hardly possess my soul. Where attempts have been made in certain quarters, during the last two years by China's government, to put an end to this traffic, our Government, by its agents and representatives, has declared that it cannot be done because of existing treaty rights, and that there must be a gradual ending of the thing. That is where we are.

This is not a question of politics, party politics. By unanimous vote, not merely of men sitting on one side of the House, but of the whole Assembly, England has said through her elected representatives, this thing is morally indefensible: but we are halting, Why? There is only one word. Revenue! India is perpetually quoted if we urge haste. Make your calculations of what it would mean to end the traffic forthwith, and then remember that the amount of money necessary for the doing of it, costly though it would be, falling upon this nation by way of taxation, would not begin to compare with the two hundred and fifty millions spent on the Boer war, and the forty millions we have added to our annual expenditure as the result of it. I am not dealing with the Boer war. It may have been absolutely necessary. It may have been a piece of devilry. I do not know or care anything about that now. The fact is that for purposes of wrong or right we spent that money. Here is a great nation crippled, blighted by a traffic we have forced upon her, and we are now standing at the bar of an awakening world conscience. The world is watching this conflict. The representatives of these other nations, however we may question it or wonder about it, will be principally interested to see what Great Britain suggests or is prepared to do. What a chance we have, not wholly to redeem the past - that we can never do - but to set ourselves right with China. We profess an interest in China. Here is our opportunity. What a chance to show the awakening world conscience that we prefer righteousness to revenue.

Has Christ anything to say to us, to England? Who am I? I am but a voice crying in the wilderness. How can I speak to England, or to governments? I may not be able to do so, but I must speak as I can. I say here tonight solemnly in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the word of Christ to this Government and to this nation at this moment is no other than this, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If we serve God we shall prefer righteousness to revenue. If we serve mammon, we shall put revenue before righteousness. If we do that, then it would be for the benefit of the world and all the coming ages that we should cease to talk about God. It is this attempt to persuade ourselves that we can still be Christian and worship God, while we persist in the wrong and shameful thing for the sake of revenue, that is harming the Kingdom of God, and flinging a blight o'er all the earth.

The issue is clear cut and definite. To serve God is to co-operate with Him, and to have done at all costs with the thing that is blighting another people. To serve mammon is eventually to be destroyed by God.

We need to be saved from our national pride, from this actual devilish conviction that neither God nor man can harm us. Already the judgment of the moth and rottenness - to use the language of one of the old Hebrew prophets - is upon us. Already, everywhere there are evidences of weakness. I say again, I have said it in other connections, our safety is not in the two-power standard. I am tired of the monotony of the phrase. Our safety is not in the new territorial army. If we do wrong persistently, we are doomed as the nations of the past have been.

Now is the hour of the Church. She should be gathering everywhere in assembly for prayer and humiliation, and insistence upon this great truth. Half the resolutions passed in our denominational assemblies and Free Church Council Federations are of little importance in the light of this. What we need is to come to the knowledge of the fact that we stand nationally at the parting of the ways.

When I have said all, I have not said half that should be said. When I have said all, the last thing and the best thing is that I should get down, and that you should get down before God, taking the sin of our nation into our own hearts. We make our boast that we are of Great Britain. Her shame is ours also. Let us get down before Him in humiliation. Let us cry to Him that He will at this moment guide, direct, and deliver us from this shame, to the glory of His name.