

# The G. Campbell Morgan Archive

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## PROLOGUE

**D**

URING Dr. Campbell Morgan's lifetime two books were written about him. A biography by John Harries, entitled, G. Campbell Morgan, The Man and His Ministry, was published in 1930. This book commemorated the fortieth year of official ministry, and was remarkable in that the author received very little help from the subject himself. Dr. Morgan never showed any interest in the writing of his life story. He brushed aside any suggestion that he write his own autobiography, and made no conscious attempt to do so. Yet those most familiar with his books and recorded sermons know how repeatedly he used the experiences of his own life to illustrate his theme. 'Experience is a hard teacher,' we say, and there are those who never learn. Life had not reserved a gentle touch for Campbell Morgan, or bestowed upon him at birth those privileges and advantages which some take as their due. Yet he wrested from experience the discipline which governed his life, and made his teacher his servant. To cull from sermons all the references to his own life-childhood, youth, and maturity-one can obtain an autobiography of sorts.

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t cannot be said that Dr. Morgan welcomed or spurned Mr. Harries' decision to write his biography. As a friend, Mr. Harries was welcomed into the home, and extended all the hospitality for which it was always noted. He took advantage of every opportunity to talk with his subject. Albums of newspaper cuttings were placed at his disposal. Miss Howell, Dr. Morgan's able secretary, was generous with her assistance, as also was Mr. A. E. Marsh, his colleague at Westminster Chapel. Mr. Harries corresponded with friends all over the world, and many sent him letters and items of interest. From Dr. Morgan's own sons and daughters he received letters which, as intimate personal testimony, are eloquent of their father's understanding of childhood and youth, and reveal the price which children pay who must forfeit their father's presence and companionship for long periods at a time.

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erhaps Mr. Harries would say that Mrs. Morgan helped him most. Though her letters were masterpieces of prose (for she knew instinctively how to express a thought with the most engaging brevity, and had a gift for discerning the wheat from the chaff), she never wrote for publication. But she always felt that her husband's life story should be written, and one can well imagine her telling it, 'here a little, there a little,' as she busied herself with the household tasks, and in her turn unconsciously drawing her own portrait as wife and mother which Mr. Harries has 'so lovingly and faithfully included in his book. For that's the way it is. We write our own stories, intentionally or

not. Dr. and Mrs. Morgan's stories are living to-day in their own sons and daughters, than which they could have paid no finer debt to posterity.



About eight years after Mr. Harries' book was published another one appeared, entitled, Campbell Morgan, Bible Teacher,\* by Harold Murray. Mr. Murray, a religious journalist of some forty years' experience, says in his opening chapter that his book is not a biography of Dr. Campbell Morgan. He calls it 'A Sketch of the Great Expositor and Evangelist-a little tribute which he, who cares so little for the praise of men, will suffer for the sake, not only of those who know and love him, but for the sake of those all over the world, who are interested in his life work.'



When the life and works of great artists are published it is always fascinating to study the sketches which are gleaned from their notebooks. Mr. Frank Salisbury, who painted the portrait of Dr. Morgan which now hangs in Cheshunt College, Cambridge, tells us in his autobiography how he was commissioned from time to time to commemorate the great national events of contemporary English history. The book contains among others a reproduction of the painting of the impressive ceremony of the burial of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey, and with it the artist's first sketch, showing how, with a few strokes, he captured the pose and grouping of the key figures. So Mr. Murray uses his journalistic pencil to give us a 'sketch' of one whom he calls 'no dry-as-dust theologian.' In brief and telling lines he has caught the spirit and essence of a living and breathtaking personality.



Devotion and understanding have undergirded both these literary efforts, and those who desire it will find in these volumes the essential facts of Dr. Morgan's life story.



Since his home-going, in 1945, it has been the growing conviction of Dr. Morgan's family that there is a need for an additional work on the life of their father. The first consideration of any such book is its readers. Who would read it, and what do they want to know? Apart from those who hold a personal acquaintance and friendship for Dr. Morgan himself are those who, at one time or another, sat at his feet, and to whom he 'opened the Book.' Some of these availed themselves of this opportunity over a period of months and years. Many a treasured Bible is dog-eared around the covers and marked up on the inside as a result of its regular attendance at the Westminster Friday Night Bible School. There are others who could only be occasional listeners- 'whenever Dr. Morgan came to Keswick,' or 'Birmingham' (without the 'h') or 'Birmingham' (which means Alabama!) or 'Toronto,' or any one of hundreds of other towns and cities in Great Britain, the United States, or Canada. There are those fortunates who look back with nostalgia to the days of the great summer conference at Mundesley, on England's east coast. Others remember Dr. Morgan at Northfield, Massachusetts, Winona Lake, Indiana, Massanetta Springs, Virginia; Stony Brook,

Long Island; Montreat, North Carolina, and other great rallying grounds for Bible students in the United States. Even greater numbers have met Dr. Morgan only within the covers of his books. Theological professors and students alike in all parts of the world are his readers. To these may be added the missionaries of the Cross in the far-flung reaches of earth and sea—that lonely, gallant army for whom Dr. Morgan had a very special love and remembrance. All these and many more pass in constant review before the eyes of those who hold themselves responsible for this book.

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r. Morgan's published works hold the key to his manner of interpretation, his expository skill and his analytical method. This is rather an attempt to answer the question that is asked in one way or another about every public figure. What was he like when you really knew him? What factors went into the making of his character and his success? What did he think about his family, and his friends, and what do they think about him? What is known in journalism as 'human interest' is the story people want to know about their heroes. We feel that Dr. Morgan's admirers are no exception to this rule. For this reason his sons and daughters wished to supply in some measure the answers to these questions, and called upon some of their father's friends to help them.

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t was evident from the beginning that someone must be authorized to undertake the assembling and planning of this material, and be entrusted with diaries and other sources of information invaluable for reference and research. The fact that they commissioned their sister-in-law to this task was certainly not because of any professional experience or skill. Her persistent plea that the work ought to be done by somebody resulted in the importunate pleader being given the assignment!

**I**

do not remember when I first met the subject of these pages. He seems to have been always there, and when my own father passed away in 1919 he promised to 'stand in the gap'—and that is exactly what he did. There were months, sometimes years, when I did not see him at all, and while a covenant once made by him never failed, these separations made it more possible to see him objectively, and a certain perspective developed which is not so easily discerned in constant, daily contact.

**I**

n the early days of this writing a most timely word of advice came from Dr. F. A. Robinson, of Toronto, whose reminiscences of Dr. Morgan appear on a later page. He said: "Your dear Dad would, I think, be among the first to say in his oft-quoted words relating to Cromwell, 'Paint me, warts and all.' . . . He preferred a likeness to a picture that has been mercifully over-retouched." If, then, in the eyes of some, any flaws or shadows appear in his character through this narrative, it is because those of us who have devised it have tried in all honesty to show that a truly great man is always very human and better loved because of it. He himself never troubled to conceal those habits of life or convictions of conscience in which some did not see eye to eye with him, and

would not wish them to be erased by others. They were part of the composite whole of a positive character, too strong and forceful, as one of his friends said, for everyone to agree with him all of the time. The fault is rather in the writing if it fails to show that in Campbell Morgan the sacred and secular were never at variance, but that to him life, and what it has to offer, is to be used and enjoyed to the glory of God.



elp has been gleaned from many sources, each one lighting a different phase of Dr. Morgan's life or a certain aspect of his character. Many of his contemporaries have passed on 'into the light.' Those who have contributed to these pages -friends, strangers, and members of the family circle, are representative of a much larger number who, because of their diversity of interest and thought, serve to emphasize how wide and catholic was Dr. Morgan's ,appeal to all classes and conditions of people. To all of these we wish to express our appreciation and gratitude.



hall we say that a dozen different artists go to look at an object of strength and beauty and dignity, and are then asked to record their impressions To begin with, they approach their subject from different angles and at different times in the day. One sees its beauty best in the morning, another prefers the strength cast by the shadow in the strong sunlight . To another the clouds and the threatening storm only serve to throw into stronger relief its grace and dignity. Yet another comes in the dusk as evening softens the lines and contours with her healing fingers. Each expresses in a different and distinctly personal way his impressions-and seeing them all the spectator says: I only saw him like this . . . I never knew him like this. . . . Now I understand him better than I ever did before.

J.M.

Taft, Texas 1950