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Two Principles of Magna Charta



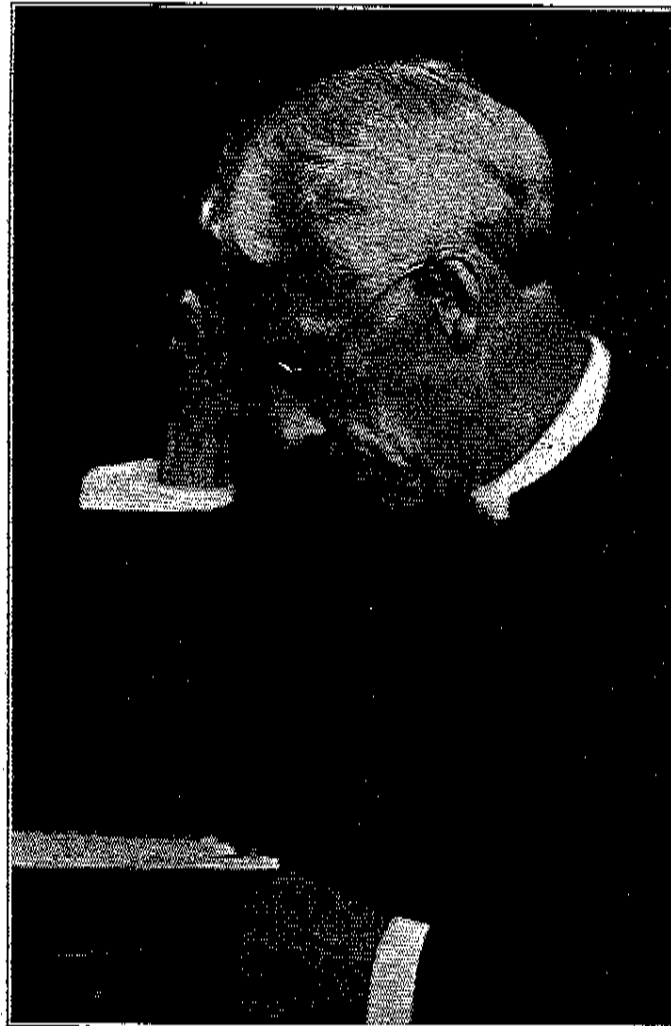
An Address Delivered by

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan

Before The National Society Magna Charta Dames

NOVEMBER 12, 1931

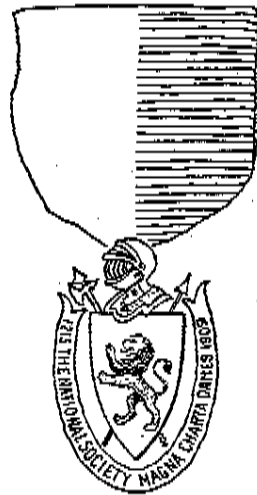
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REV. G. CAMPBELL, MORGAN, D. D.
Eminent British scholar and teacher

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Dr. G. Campbell Morgan

Dr. Campbell Morgan, born in Gloucestershire, England, was trained for the teaching profession, and entered the Congregational ministry in England in 1887. He held pastorates at Stone, Rugeley, Birmingham and London, New Court. In 1896 he first visited the United States to fulfill an engagement at Ocean Grove. He also went to Northfield, Mass., giving one address there. Mr. D. L. Moody invited him the following year to Northfield, which visit became annual. In 1901 he came to reside in this country, doing Northfield Extension work, and he remained here until 1904, holding Bible Conferences in most of the principal cities.

In 1904 he returned to England, to take up the work of Westminster Church. This was a forlorn hope, which under his leadership became a great success. During the thirteen years of this pastorate Dr. Morgan saw at his Bible school each Friday, an average of fifteen hundred students who came from all parts of the metropolis and country. After service with the Y. M. C. A. at the training quarters during the war, Dr. Morgan came to this country in 1919 to conduct Bible conferences. This work he has continued to do both in the United States and in Canada, with marked success. He finds everywhere the keenest interest manifested in the Word of God; people hungry for a Biblical and positive message, free from all controversial questionings.

Dr. Morgan has been minister of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia since December, 1929. He is the author of over seventy books, and is one of the foremost Bible scholars and preachers of the present day.



Two Principles of Magna Charta

*Madam President, Dames of the Society of
Magna Charta, and my fellow Guests:*

I CONFESS to a feeling of satisfaction that I am here today, and I consider it a privilege to address the descendants of the Barons of 1215. Perhaps I may say that sense of satisfaction is deepened by the fact that I am from the other side of the water, purely a son of the people, having so far as I know, no baronial tinge in my blood whatsoever. It is surely fitting that one who comes from the rank and file, should recognize the splendid service rendered in the long ago by the Barons of old England.

Until my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Wurts, handed to me the literature concerning this remarkable Society, I had never heard of it. Your country is absolutely bewildering in its Societies and Organizations, it is almost as bad as England in that matter. However, my interest was naturally aroused, and I read through Magna Charta once more. Certainly I had not read it for half a century.

In going through your literature, I found that in your interpretation of your Society you recognize membership in it—I am now quoting the actual words,—as “a Dower and a Trust.” That phrase as I read it gripped me at once; two great words are brought into close connection—Dower, and Trust; and in their very union is the revelation of a principle. According to that, the principle which holds you together in this fellowship is your recognition of your relationship to that past, and that it is to be a Dower and a Trust. That I say, recognizes a basic principle, and that basic principle is, that privilege may be spelled with more letters,—responsibility. Not merely a dower, a gift, but because a dower, a trust. I am not going to instruct you on the meaning of Dower. I am not going to give you any instruction on the meaning of Trust. The phrase means that you recognize that every gift creates a responsibility. I believe you are conscious of that; and in your association in this great Society you are not only proud of being descendants of doughty Barons, but you recognize that such relationship entails responsibility.

Another matter which impresses me is that this is a Society of Women. That is very significant. As I went through Magna Charta again, I found that it did not do very much for women. I mean, of course, in itself, in its own provisions. Mr. Wurts asked me just now whether I thought Magna Charta was an edict or a law. I don't know, and he confessed it was a debatable question. Whether legislation, petition or grant, whether either or neither, it was a great declaration, and it was a declaration of principles. But I was struck by the fact that by its provisions a woman could not accuse a man of murder, except the murder of her own husband, and she did not often do that! She could not bear witness to the status of a man. She could not appoint a testamentary guardian, and she could only be a guardian to her own children to a very limited extent. Moreover by

the terms of Magna Charta, her Will was revoked by marriage. Of course I am referring to the document. No woman's will in the history of humanity was ever revoked by anything; but so far as a documentary will is concerned, that was so.

Nevertheless one realizes that Magna Charta opened the way for woman's emancipation. In its recognition of the great basic principles of life, the centre of which recognition was the recognition of the greatness of personality, it was impossible in the issue of the years as they ran on into centuries, that woman should remain where the Magna Charta left her. The door was open, and gradually through the passing centuries woman has come to perfect emancipation. Perhaps there still may be some limitations to be removed, but I hope I may be in heaven before any more are removed. I have no doubt however that the Dames of this Society, descendants of the Barons, are conscious of the fact that whereas in the actual terms of Magna Charta their position was not an enviable one, it did open the door, and make way for the opportunities that have come to them.

As you recognize that your relationship to this Society is a dower and a trust, I am venturing to remind you of two basic principles of that great instrument. I want first to name them briefly, and then stress them in their present application.

Of the two principles of which I am thinking, the first is recognized and named at the opening of the document, and the other is revealed in its final provision.

The first principle you will find in almost the first words of Magna Charta, "Quod ecclesia Anglicana libera sit." Now we will cancel the "Anglicana," and take what remains as revealing the first basic principle, "That the

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Church is free." Everything else in Magna Charta grows out of that recognition. So far as England then was concerned, and so far as history since has been concerned, that is the root principle. I want to speak of it and apply it in a few moments. Then the final provision of Magna Charta was that all the concessions made to the Barons were to be extended by them to their sub-tenants. There I find the two great principles that impress me. Now I am far more concerned with principles than rules; and I was rather glad when Mr. Wurts suggested that Magna Charta was not a law or an edict. It was surely the gathering up and expressing in language, of tremendous principles of human life; and those two are the two that seem to me to be supreme in that great document.

First then the recognition of the freedom of the Church. It is a most interesting thing to go over that history again. I am really indebted to you for inviting me to address you. It has given me the chance of reading over old ground again. In doing so one is reminded that the inspiring spirit of the Barons at that time was none other than Stephen Langton, and he was the Pope's delegate, or legate to England. Nevertheless he stood strenuously by the side of his fellow countrymen. In doing so he put that statement at the forefront of everything, that the Church is free.

I am using the word Church in its catholic sense, and I am using the word catholic in its proper sense, as applying to all those who are Christian, quite irrespective of their denominational and ecclesiastical convictions, all of which one respects and recognizes. But there is something far deeper than such things, the great fact of the Church and of her history in the world. The first recognition of Magna Charta was a recognition of the fact that the Church is a spiritual organism, which can only function as it should function, in freedom from all control outside its own being, and its own life. I wonder if you have ever faced seriously

the fact that that great instrument opened with that recognition. We are always a little in danger of running on to the flowers and the fruits and forgetting roots; but it is very important that we should get back there, and see that this whole thing came out of that supreme conviction.

The second principle, interpreted in other words, is that privilege in the things of personality extends to all persons, and never must be considered as the exclusive right of any. Thus it is immediately seen that Magna Charta is the very atmosphere of your own national society and constitution. The very things I have been saying moreover are distinctly American.

Now may I take those two, if I do not weary you, for a few minutes, to interpret and apply. First of all the Church is a supernatural spiritual institution, existing for the well-being of humanity. Pope Gregory VII, better known by his saint name of Hildebrand, fought,—shall I use the word,—for that principle. I am not talking about his application of it, but I am recognizing his attitude towards it. Let me give you his words. Hildebrand held and taught—now for the actual quotation,—that,

“The Church, founded by God, is entrusted with the task of embracing all mankind in a single society in which His will is the only law.”

That to my mind is a very remarkable quotation. Whereas I am a Protestant, I recognize how much we owe to that conception. I hold that his principle was right, though I may and do think his application of it was wrong. That then was the first thing in Magna Charta, the declaration that the church of God is free. And freedom meant freedom from the control of any earthly power in order that she might be able to function according to the intention of her very life in bringing men everywhere into the breadth

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and the beauty and the beneficence of that authority and reign of God, apart from which, I think we shall unanimously agree, there can be no life in all its breadth and beauty.

Then do not let us forget in this connection, that the interpretation of the Church is Biblical. Just as the Bible interprets the Church, so the Church is called to interpret the Bible. I was greatly struck a little while ago by something I found in reading Huxley. Huxley was one of that galaxy of men under whose influence some of us lost our faith, or faith passed under eclipse a generation ago. Nobody will suspect Huxley of anything like sympathy with certain phases of what we should call the Christian Belief; and yet listen to this:—

“The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed; down to modern times no state has had a constitution in which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account.”

Magna Charta starts with a recognition that the Church, —which is the institution of the Bible, its interpretation is found in its literature, and the interpretation of that literature is to be given to the world through the Church—is to be free. That means that she is to be free to function. This then if I may remind you with great respect is your dower and your trust. Traced back to that first principle, it is that of a spiritual interpretation of life as against that which is purely materialistic. That was the inspiration behind the action of the Barons. I am not going to say all of them understood it. I may say so far as I am concerned, as I have told you, I am a son of the people, and I am a hybrid, half English and half Welsh, with the Welsh predominating. I was born in England on that matchless space of beauty, the Cotswold Hills in the heart of Gloucestershire. I see that one of the Sureties for that document was the Duke of Gloucester; so there was some intelligence brought to bear

upon that poor weak monarch! Do not forget the Bible was translated first from the original languages into the English tongue by Tyndale. That was the atmosphere working at the time, which created a passion; it was the atmosphere of the recognition of the spiritual nature of life. That is your dower. That is your trust. Merely to be proud that blood is coursing in your veins which coursed in the veins of the Barons is a very questionable reason for pride; but to be proud to be the descendants of men who were so far influenced by the spiritual conception of life as to say to the tyrant King, Personality should be released from slavery, is a thing to be utterly proud of; and that is to be your dower and your trust.

Then follows the second principle, which is the corollary of the first. If the Church's conception of life be true; in other words, if the Biblical conception of personality be true; then it is true that man, in the deepest essence of his being is spiritual. I know that is challenged today, but believing that you are the daughters of those men of the long ago who recognized it, I think you accept it. You may have very many differing interpretations—I am not concerned with them now; but that is the fundamental thing which is affirmed. Then at once the dignity of all personality is seen, the dignity of every individual life is recognized. "A man's a man for a' that." I apologize to any Scot present for a wrong accent; but surely Bobby Burns was right. He had seen to the very heart of life. If that is true, every dower is a trust, and privilege creates responsibility. The rights of all are the responsibility of each. Philadelphia is trying to express that conviction today in this hour of strange stress and strain, this inexplicable hour, may I say to yourselves, as well as to a man like myself, still a citizen of the British Empire, who lives among you and shares your gracious hospitality. It is a great country, the richest in the world, with

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stores of the world's gold, its streets tramped by hungry men and women. I do not understand it, but I never discuss American politics. To me they are like the peace of God; they pass all understanding! But that being so, I say, in an hour like this, Philadelphia is trying to show, is going to show I am perfectly certain, her sense of the rights of every individual to life, and life in its fulness. Privilege, I repeat, always creates responsibility; and if you will forgive something that may merge very near to preaching in finishing an after-dinner speech, I would with all courtesy, and the greatest respect, write that thing upon your heart and conscience, you descendants of the Barons, that whatever privilege you have accruing from the historic, extended to you in that liberty by the men so long ago, you hold as a trust. The very best investment that can be made in life is an investment in personality; not your own personality, but someone else's. I am sure I may without any protest quote words that came from the lips of Him Who to some of you is the one Lord and Master and Teacher, when He said to the men of His own age, what I am sure He is still saying concerning wealth; "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness": not as the Old Version reads, "Make to yourselves friends *of* the mammon of unrighteousness," but "Make to yourselves friends *by means of* the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it"—the mammon of unrighteousness,—“fails; they”—the friends you have made by its use,—“may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.” That is the investment of wealth in personality. Wealth after all, is but a secondary and symbolic thing. There is nothing we need more today than that you, the descendants of those Barons, and all the fine and splendid and refined and cultured womanhood of this land, and all lands, should invest all they have in the interest of others. That is the second principle. First the freedom of the Church to fulfil her function, of the spiritual interpretation of life; and then the fact

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that those who derive benefits are called to share them, to pass them on; to see to it that in every human being, personality is to be considered, personality is to be served, personality whenever possible is to be lifted and benefitted and glorified.

I hope everyone here is familiar with Mark Twain. I am rather amazed to find, Madam President, so many Americans do not know very much about Mark Twain. They know his name, and think he was a funny man! To me he is a profound philosopher. The man who has read Mark Twain only for his fun has lost his way. Underneath his fun was a vein of real philosophy. You know his "Yankee at the Court of King Arthur." I do not mean the picture, a ridiculous thing, but the book itself. You will remember in the story how the King went disguised through his kingdom; and his companion asked him to speak to a beggar by the way, and said to him, "He is your brother"; and the King replied, "Brother to dirt like that!" There is a great temptation, unconsciously it may be, if you are descendants of Barons, to feel that way. Do not then forget that the Barons recognized that they were pledged to apply what they claimed from the King to those beneath them. It is a great hour when one comes to the recognition of that fact.

I think you are to be congratulated in this Society, on your large freedom from almanacs and statistics and business schedules. The spirit of the thing is great; and I desire for you that that spirit may become a living thing, affecting you in all your relationships with life.

Let me close by saying one or two things quite simply. We are living as I have said, in very strange times. Surely we can say with Hamlet,

"The time is out of joint";

but God Almighty deliver us from going on as Hamlet did;

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"O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right."

That is unchristian. The time is out of joint; but let us
rather say,

O glorious fact,
That I am born to help to set it right!

That is the true principle; and in the measure in which we
grasp it, we shall make our contribution to our day and
generation. Nay rather, let us say with Ugo Bassi in Mrs.
Hamilton King's "The Disciples";

"The vine from every living limb bleeds wine;
Is it the poorer for that spirit shed?
The drunkard and the wanton drink thereof;
Are they the richer for that gift's excess?
Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth;
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice;
And whoso suffers most hath most to give."



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John by the grace of God King of England Lord of
 Ireland Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and
 Count of Anjou to all his faithful subjects Greeting
 Know ye that we by this our present Charter have
 confirmed for us and our heirs forever No freeman
 shall be seized or imprisoned or disseised or outlawed
 or banished or in any way destroyed nor will we
 go upon him nor will we send upon him unless by
 the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of
 the land To no one will we sell to no one will we
 deny or delay right or justice Given by our hand
 in the meadow which is called Runnymede between
 Windsor and Staines the fifteenth day of June in
 the seventeenth year of our reign



A free translation from the Latin, of the opening and closing sentences of the Great Charter of King John, together with its two most celebrated sections, each letter being a facsimile of the original.

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**THE NATIONAL SOCIETY
MAGNA CHARTA DAMES**

A SOCIAL ORDER

Instituted March 1st, 1909

**Regents and Members in 47 States and Foreign Countries
(There are no State Societies)**

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Further information may be obtained from the Secretary.
For convenience kindly address all correspondence to the
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The National Society Magna Charta Dames

was instituted at the Capitol of the United States, in the City of Washington, on March 1st, 1909. It is a social Order composed of women who are lineal descendants of one or more of the Barons of England who in or before the year 1215 rendered actual service toward securing, and who, after many defeats, finally did secure the articles of constitutional liberty, properly called the Magna Charta, from their sovereign, John, King of England, which he ratified and delivered to them "in the meadow which is called Runnemede between Windsor and Staines," on the Thames, above London, on the 15th day of June, A. D., 1215.

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The Baronial Colors—*or and gules*



THE ROYAL SIGNET

Alternate Insignia of the Society