

THINGS WHICH CANNOT BE SHAKEN

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(Continued from last issue)

Text: "And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken . . . that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."—Hebrews 12:27.

Look at the international scene. The concussion of the block-busters dropped by B-29's might be taken as a symbol and a measure of the upheaval and confusion which the war has brought to the nations on all continents. Wholly aside from the frightful devastations of the war itself, there are the countless complications which are the invariable by-products of war. We have governments in exile and revolutionists in power. We have puppet governments and Quisling regimes in countries where the dictators are in control and we have dictation and confusion in the so-called liberated lands where the allies have the upper hand. We have an increasingly determined scramble for power and profits after the present fighting is over. All of which gives point and substance to the recent remarks of a social research expert who declared, The war will have solved no basic problems. As a matter of fact, it will have made a good many of them more complicated . . . To expect otherwise is like expecting that pneumonia will have cured the physical debility that brought it on.

Or turn for a moment to the realm of religion. Through the early part of this century theological liberalism held sway. It had a philosophy, a theology and a psychology that were all sugar and no salt. It had a sugary philosophy of history: history was a march of inevitable progress. It had a sugar theology about God: God was a being of such melting tenderness that there could be no hell in his universe, and, no matter what men might do, he could somehow see them through to a very happy end. It had, moreover, a sugary psychology of man; man was, after all, not a really sinful being who needed to be changed in a spiritual rebirth, but a being essentially good who needed only to have that good brought out by education and by improvements in his environment.

But two world wars in one generation have shaken the very daylights out of that easy-going and unbiblical liberalism. Listen, for example, to the testimony of a converted liberal whose delicate, painted glass theology was smashed to pieces by the ghastly events connected with the present war: "I know beyond any possibility of doubt that Humanism is a false faith and that Christian Liberalism is an aberration and an abortion. Not all the king's horses nor the king's men can put that particular humpty-dumpty together again. For me, Humanism and Modernism were shattered beyond hope of repair. I have submitted evidence which I claim puts beyond doubt the fact that human nature has evil in its fibre and structure."

That is what I mean by having the grit to face the facts when God's shakings are loose in the world. Dr. Davies faced them and, with a brave honesty, did something about them. He has given the world a forthright confession of his conversion to a Bible-centered faith.

What will you do with the facts as they close in upon your life? Some of us are so afraid of changes that we always run from them. We take the foolish position that the old way, whatever it is, is always good enough. This swift-paced era is dreadfully hard on such persons. It is breaking them

down so that all they do is sulk or scold.

Some of us, on the other hand, try to make the best of changes that are forced upon us, but we do so with the thought that when the crisis is past, we will promptly return to the "good old days." That too may be a very stupid and disappointing course to follow. Yet it is the course being followed right now by some of our die-hard business men and by some of our Tory-minded statesmen. I am far from suggesting that all of the changes that are coming out of this war are going to be for the good, but I feel it is necessary to say emphatically to you and to myself that it is a vain thing to dream of going back to the same old U. S. A. or the same old world that we had before Munich and Pearl Harbor.

Out of these shakings, we may be sure, will come a changed order of things. If man has his way in setting up the new order, it will last for a while and then it too will be jolted into collapse. If God has his way, on the other hand, then we shall see that love has greater survival value than hate, that justice is more enduring than cunning and craftiness, that decency outlives indecency, and that co-operative good-will yields more permanent dividends than ruthless competition. We shall see, to use the language of St. John, that "the fashion of this world passeth away," but "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Digging into our text a bit further, we discover another requirement if we are to stand up when times of shaking are upon us. We need not only the grit that faces the facts but also the grip that holds to the things that are unshaken and unshakable. The disappearance or destruction of some things, says our writer, should serve to throw up into bolder relief the things that are indestructible: "That the things which cannot be shaken may remain" What are they?

1. For one thing, in God's Son, Jesus, we have an unshakable person. With what thrilling confidence the apostle cries, "But we are come to Jesus!" The figure of Moses faded out, but the figure of Jesus is destined to loom larger and larger for ever and ever. A score of years ago Dr. W. E. Orchard, of England, declared: "Christ may exhaust this world; this world will never exhaust Christ." He was right.

Other leaders live and die; Jesus died once and lived eternally, adequate in his power to make our lives what they ought to be and faithful to us unto the end. Some Philadelphia newsboys, waiting in a little shack for their bundles in the early morning, made it a practice to tune in on George Palmer's gospel broadcast. They grew fond of the theme song, "Jesus Never Fails." One of them, out of a non-Christian home, became particularly attached to the broadcast and to the message of that simple song. When Mr. Palmer began giving out plaques on which were inscribed the words, "Jesus Never Fails," they sent for one and put it up over the radio.

Then one day Palmer received a letter from the group, telling him that this little fellow had just died and that they had taken care that the plaque was placed by the side of his body in the casket. In their unsophisticated way of talking, they said that they wanted their preacher to know that they had sent one of his plaques to heaven! What they were really saying was that their little pal, having taken Christ as his Saviour, had proved in life and in death the truth of the theme song—"Jesus Never Fails." Unshakable is the person of Christ.

2. Consider further that in God's love we have an unshakable peace. Reaching back into

the larger context of this chapter, we come upon this gem: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (v. 6). The Christian does not claim that he immediately understands the whole meaning of his suffering; he only claims that, since he is in God's hands, the suffering does have a meaning. Somehow God is right in there with him, loving him, strengthening him, adding stature to his character and understanding to his soul.

3. And then something else belongs among the unshaken things: in God's holiness we have an unshaken principle, "Follow peace with all men," says verse 14, "and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

"We have outlived the old standards," so we say. But have we? Not by as much as one split second. To be sure, we have scorned them. We have done our best to scuttle them. "Holiness," we have scoffed, "how stupid and old-fashioned that sounds—and how insufferably dull!" It isn't holiness that we want; it's happiness. Happiness wherever we can find it; if we can't find it on Decency Drive or Society Street, we'll go to Rotten Row!

4. And then one more thing: in God's Word we have an unshakable proclamation: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," is the burning admonition of our writer in verse 25. He knows his history, does this dead-in-earnest apostle. He knows that God has always had a "Word" for men in the day of their need. God had a "word" for men at Mt. Sinai, and he spoke it in the Law. God had a "Word" for men in the dark days of the Captivity, when his people were languishing in Babylon, and he spoke it, says our author, through the prophet Haggai. Just when Jerusalem was a shambles, and Solomon's Temple was in ruins, and the future of Israel seemed most hopeless, came the word of the Lord like a trumpet, announcing that he would shake things into life and hope, and a grand new destiny would take shape among the ashes of their present plight.

It was proclaimed with assurance that a new temple would rise upon the foundation of the old. It did. It was proclaimed that "the Desire of all nations" should come—the Lord Jesus Christ. And he came! Don't you see it, argues the apostle with his fellow Christians, God has given us his word—the word of his Jesus Christ. And he came! Don't you see it, live by it, yes, if need be, die by it. "Refuse not him that speaketh." The time-tested wisdom of the Holy Scriptures is for us. The solemn warnings against folly and iniquity are for us. The "exceeding great and precious promises" are for us. This book of God has never been outmoded or invalidated. It is, as Paul Scherer admirably suggests, not the "Book of the Month;" it is the "Book of the Ages." God shakes the things that are removable in order to reveal and confirm the things that cannot be shaken.

As to the third major requirement for meeting successfully the days of shaking, it is named for us in these words which follow our text: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." The grit to face the facts of our shaken world—we need that. The grip that clings to the things that cannot be shaken—we must have that. And then this very personal thing—the grace to be changed ourselves in conformity with the eternal pattern of God's heavenly kingdom.—Pentecostal Herald.