

Things Which Cannot Be Shaken

By F. M. Perry

God once spoke to the Twelve Tribes of Israel from the top of Mount Sinai, and when He did, Heb. 12:26 tells us, "His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.'" And then the writer of Hebrews goes on to explain in verse 27, "And this expression, 'yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."

Through these words God tells us that He will shake and remove all those things which are made (which are created) which can be shaken, and only those things will remain for eternity which cannot be shaken. The things which cannot be shaken, then, are the things on which our hope of eternal salvation depend. In this life on earth there are before us at all times both the things which will be shaken (things which are only temporary), and the things which cannot be shaken (things which are eternal). Among all these things, then, if we wish to be saved with the eternal salvation which God offers us, we must seize upon and cling to the things which cannot be shaken.

Those of you who were in Alaska to experience the great earthquake of 1964 know that the earth can be shaken. The earth on which we live is subject to earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, tornados, hurricanes, and floods. Many people have their very existence shaken by these things regularly. Communities and buildings and lives that have been thought secure and lasting are shaken to their very foundations. Our lives are shaken by sickness, accident, loss of job and income. Our parents, friends, and relatives are soon taken from us as they pass away from this earthly life. Indeed, we ourselves will soon pass from the scene. All earthly lives are soon shaken by death.

As we look around us at the world, we see that many things are being shaken and are crumbling. History shows us the great empires of the past that have disappeared from the scene. Change seems to be the order of our day, too. Perhaps more than ever before religious men are drawing away from God. Many believe that the only God who ever existed is the "god" within them, that there is no power greater than man himself. And so we have the social religions which are only concerned with the world of here and now. Our country is shaking because of these things.

The whole world is shaking. The struggle between ideologies, the awakening of the poorer peoples to demand greater material things, the struggle to provide food for the exploding population, these things and things like them are causing the world to shake. Many people are afraid because everything in their world seems to be threatened.

Many people do not know that there are things within this world which cannot be shaken, basic things, important things. Most of our problems stem from man's short sightedness. We only see what is immediately before us. We can't see the forest for the trees. We think that there is nothing beyond this life. We don't realize that we are eternal beings created by an eternal living God. We are not properly oriented in our environment which is an eternal environment. Man needs to know that there are things which cannot be shaken and that these unshakeable things are the most important things in our lives. They give us a perspective on which to base the decisions of our lives.

What are these things which cannot be shaken? Hebrews tells us that we receive "a kingdom which cannot be shaken." We receive it from the Living God. The Living God is the first and most basic of all unshakeable things. Within this Living God is the Living Father, the Living Son, and the Living Holy Spirit. Two more basic things which God has given us are His Living Word and His Living Church. These things are with us now and they cannot be shaken. They are eternal.

But, "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity," says Psalms 39: 5. Let us turn from the vain striving based on the mere thoughts of

men, to the unshakeable things.

Today let us explore the most basic of these unshakeable things, the Living God.

I first believed in God because those around me in childhood believed in God. Before my intelligence was developed enough for me to reason out things for myself, my parents and others around me instilled in me a belief in God. Blessed is the child in this day and age who has believing parents and is raised with the knowledge that there is a Living God. That child has a far greater chance toward real usefulness and happiness in the world, and a better chance at eternal salvation, than the child who is raised in ignorance of the Living God.

But, no matter how we are raised, human reason tells us all that there is a Living God. In my younger days I had the privilege of hearing Brother Batsell Barrett Baxter speak on this subject. He said, man must believe in the Living God because of "the starry heavens above and the sense of ought within." The "starry heavens above" have to do with this universe which we see before us, the realm of nature, which shows so clearly the imprint of God the creator and the present operator. "The sense of ought within" has to do with the fact that we have an innate sense of what we ought to do. It has to do with that which God has planted within us that points toward the right and points away from the wrong.

Throughout all the ages of the earth thinking men have recognized the fact of the Living God from the "starry heavens above." "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." (Psalms 19: 1-3). And Romans 1: 18 tells us that men are without excuse if they do not seek for the Creator whose handiwork is so displayed around them.

What would you think if I took you outside and pointed to my car and said, that car had no creator. It was not planned. It did not come from an automobile factory. It just happened. It resulted from a chance

combination of atoms and molecules. I just discovered it and now I am using it. Ridiculous? Of course. Even if you had never seen another automobile in your life, you would know that it had been manufactured, created so to speak, by men. Are we to believe those who point to the most intricate and sophisticated machine of which we know, the earth and the starry heavens above, and say that they just happened without cause or design. The starry heavens above declare that they are the handiwork of God. Everyone can recognize the knowledge and the wisdom of God shining through. Our faith begins with realization that the universe comes from a supreme intelligence and creator.

"The sense of ought within," that tells us what we "ought" to do, is something that is in man and not in animals. I'm not speaking of the instincts which direct the mechanical functioning of our bodies. Animals have them as do men. But I'm speaking of the instinct that seems to be a combination of intuition and conscience that chooses the right morally, and prevents us from acting just by animal instinct alone. There is implanted in men a higher standard and an ability to recognize and choose that standard. For instance, there are certain high standards among all tribes of men, whether they be "highly civilized" or whether they be "aboriginal". In no society is it thought good to betray one's friends, to be selfish at the expense of others, to take another man's wife, or to run away in the midst of battle.

Paul said to the Romans, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending themselves ..." (Romans 2: 14-15).

This passage is an indication that Paul recognized that "sense of ought within" of which we speak, and points out that the Gentiles, who never knew God's Law given to Moses, nonetheless had the ability to discern the better way of life.

This marvelous machine in which we live, the human body, points clearly to an Almighty Creator. And the "sense of ought within" points to the

fact that the Creator has made man as something special in this universe, with dominion over every other living thing on the earth, just as the Genesis record tells us.

In addition, mankind seems to "have a "built-in" sense of worship towards the Creator. Throughout the whole history of man, we find every tribe of the earth worshipping something. In olden days, and even today, man has worshiped animals, objects and images, his own ancestors, etc. Man wants to worship something. Now when you find a plug, or something that gives you the idea that it should plug into something else, you look around for the socket that the plug will fit. Since man has a built-in sense of worship, this calls for a search for the One whom he should worship. And it is in this search that man has often stopped short to worship idols instead of the Living God. But, for this worship of idols Paul in the book of Romans says mankind is without excuse and will reap the wrath of the Living God.

The realm of reason points us toward the fact of the Living God. This is the beginning of our faith which "then motivates us to a further search. And when we begin to search God meets us with the revelation that is in His book, the Bible. We have reasoned that the earth and the universe and all that is in them had to have been created by a supreme power. God then reveals to us Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Despite all the theories that have been put forward by men, that first verse of God's Bible is the finest, fullest, and most satisfactory answer to the question of the origin of all things. Man cannot reason himself to God. But reason points out the proper direction toward God, and then God meets man with revelation. The formula should be obvious to all men. God spoke it most clearly to us through Jesus in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

We have reasoned that the human body had to have a Creator. God tells us in Genesis 2: 7, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became

a living soul." Many scientists and other people of the world have been and are seeking for "the answer" to the question, "What is life." They have ignored God's revelation. They have found no answer. Some years ago it was suggested that life was first produced by spontaneous generation. However, after much experimentation, most scientists have learned that life can only come from other life and be handed down from life to life. It cannot be manufactured or created by man. If they will follow the direction in which their experiments point, they will find the revelation of God: "In the beginning God created ..." "And God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life." Not only is the Living God the creator, He is the life giver.

We have recognized the "sense of ought" and the built-in sense of worship within man. God's revelation shows us how this came about. The Genesis record tells us that God spoke to our first parents in the Garden of Eden and rebuked their sin. That is, God revealed Himself and His displeasure at the disobedience of His creatures. Mankind has a built-in memory of that first revelation by God to man. In the idol worship of the pagan religions we see human perversions of that first revelation by God to man. Man was created by God in a perfect state and setting. But man fell from that state, revelation tells us. And all history since that time is the history of man struggling to regain that original state.

There is a theory in the world which says that the forms of paganism that have existed in the history of the world were steps in a gradual process of development of the idea of God. This theory says that this gradual process has finally evolved into the Hebrew and Christian religions and the present day beliefs in God. If this theory is true, God is non-existent and merely the product of human thinking. However, even human reasoning indicates this theory to be false. The experience of man has been that man does not develop religiously to a higher state on his own. This age in which we live today is no more highly developed in religious thought than any other age of the earth. When we study ancient religions, as we go back in time nearer the source of these religions, we find religion getting purer and better. Almost all the man made religions have become worse as time has passed. God has revealed in the Bible

that Adam and Eve were in a better state at the beginning. Human history after that illustrates the defilement of that state.

The Bible is a believable Book. God has created us with the power to reason, and reason points toward the Book, not away from it when you consider the evidence. The only complete answers to the basic questions of existence, to morals, and to knowledge are found in the Bible and nowhere else.

The Bible claims to be God's revelation to mankind. It reveals that God created the heavens, the earth, and all things including man. It reveals God's nature and attributes. We read in the Bible of God's dealings with the Patriarchs and how He spoke directly to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

As time passed, the eternal plan of God to forge a nation into which the Messiah would be born, became evident. Having delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt and having brought them safely through the Red Sea, God appeared to them in Mount Sinai. God commanded Moses to set bounds about the mountain, and He descended to the mountain, as we read about it in Exodus 19: 16-19. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the Mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded loud, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice."

So the Living God appeared to His people to announce to them His covenant, the Ten Commandments. The New Testament book of Hebrews goes on to tell us that God shook the earth at that time and said, "Yet, once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." The Book of Hebrews tells us that the final shaking of the earth and heaven will be done so that only those things which cannot be shaken

may remain. The knowledge that there are things which can be shaken and will be destroyed, and that there are things also which cannot be shaken, was visibly demonstrated to the Children of Israel.

(This sermon was delivered by F. M. Perry to the Church of Christ at Anchor Point, Alaska in October 1987.)