**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 18 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THINGS SHAKEN - THINGS NOT SHAKEN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain.*

*Hebrews 12:27*

THE FIRST VALUE OF THESE WORDS IS THAT THEY CONSTITUTE a Christian interpretation of a phrase in a Hebrew prophecy. Their final value is that they reveal a perpetual method of God in His dealing with men.

As to the first of these. The prophet Haggai was looking back to God's shaking of the world by the giving of the Law, and he was looking on to the shaking of the world by the coming of Christ. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews had exactly the same double outlook. The letter was written to Hebrews who were filled with fear because the Hebrew economy was being shaken to its foundations by the Christian faith, and the writer reminded them of what their own prophet Haggai had said. By the giving of the moral law the whole world had been shaken with a shaking symbolized by the Mount which burned with fire. Then he reminded them that the shaking in the midst of which they lived, and of which they were tremendously afraid, was in fulfilment of the prophecy. God was indeed shaking; shaking the order of things that He Himself had made, but the purpose of that shaking was that things which can be shaken should be removed so that things which cannot be shaken should be seen to abide. The final value of this word, then, is that of its interpretation of this shaking. It is a revelation of a method of God. This method of God was recognized by all these old prophetic writers and as surely by the New Testament writers. Ezekiel thus gave expression to a Divine determination and so revealed the same Divine method; "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: … until He come Whose right it is; and I will give it Him," the Whole fact was expressed by Paul in his Corinthian letter when speaking of God's anointed and appointed King, His own well-beloved Son, He said of He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies Him: under His feet." Not: He must wait, but He must reign. The word marks executive activity.

In these words, then, we have faith's outlook upon convulsion and upheaval. The facts of convulsion and upheaval are perpetually patent to all men, and they are variously described. We speak of change, we speak of revolution, we speak of calamity, we speak of catastrophe, or we sometimes use that so expressive expression, the deluge. I say these facts of upheaval, of convulsion, of shaking, are patent to all men. Faith sees all this, and faith feels all this, but faith sees far more. Faith is a volitional activity of the soul of man in response to a Divine revelation. It goes without saying that knowledge must precede faith. There must be some truth upon which faith can fasten. Knowledge makes its appeal to the intellect, and faith, not able to prove, ventures. The beginning is always with God. Whether the first approach of God to the soul of man is of value, depends entirely upon the soul's response to that approach. When response is made to the first gleam of light, the soul finds itself admitted to the shining way which broadens to the perfect day, and so it comes to clear vision. This is the history of all prophetic interpretation of the ways of God with men. The words of our text reveal the distinction between the outlook of the man of faith upon the circumstances in the midst of which we are living and the outlook of the man who is merely the man of sight. Faith watches change and revolution, and calamity and catastrophe, yea, observes the sweeping deluge, and then says: God is shaking. The Lord sitteth King upon the water floods.

Let us, then, consider the conception in itself and attempt to make a present application of it.

I have said that here we have the vision of faith in the day of upheaval. What is that vision? It is, first of all, a vision of the fact that it is God Who is shaking the order in the midst of which we live. It is, second, a vision of the reason why God is shaking that order. Thrones are trembling, empires are rocking, battles are raging, and all men know that. But faith knows more. Observe the absolute accuracy of the prophetic word; notice the modern element in the writing:

… I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

That is the story of the things in the midst of which we are living, and that is how faith looks at it. Faith declares that it is God Who is shaking. Faith is conscious also, as men are conscious everywhere, of spiritual and moral disturbances. Ideals are shattered, laws have failed to fulfil their function, and policies everywhere have broken down. All men know these things, but faith, looking at the disorder, observing it, acutely conscious of it, yet climbing the height, says: God is shattering our ideals to teach us the vanity of them; God is so dealing with humanity that it bursts the bounds of laws and so learns the inadequacy of laws which it is able to make for itself; God is breaking down our policies and laughing at their folly in order that we may learn their futility.

So we come to the second fact which faith sees, and it is of supreme importance. Faith sees the Divine purpose in the shaking. God's shaking is for the destruction of the transient, whether it be good or bad. It is for the destruction of everything that is evil. God's shaking of things in a terrific hour of judgment like this, is His breaking of the bruised reed, His quenching of the smoking flax. I have of set purpose quoted those pictorial words of Scripture. We generally use them, and in some senses with perfect justification, as indicating the fact of God's patience. He will not break the bruised reed; He will not quench the smoking flax. That is true in so far as it goes. It reveals one method of the Divine activity. But to make this the final meaning of these words is to be false to their intention. The declaration is that He will not break the bruised reed, He will not quench the smoking flax until He send forth judgment unto victory. When He sends forth judgment unto victory, He does break the bruised reed, and He does quench the smoking flax. The bruised reed and the smoking flax are not the emblems of frail humanity striving towards goodness. What is a bruised reed? Weakness weakened. What is smoking flax? That which has within it the element of its own destruction. God leaves the bruised reed in all its boastfulness and leaves the smoking flax to smoulder in its own fire until He send forth judgment unto victory. Then He breaks the one, and quenches the other. God today has been sending forth judgment unto victory. He is breaking bruised reeds, and He is quenching smoking flax. He is working for the destruction of evil things and for the destruction of good things if they are outworn, because they may become hindrances though at one time they were helps. "Lest one good custom should corrupt the world," God will break through and destroy the custom. That is the atmosphere of the text. God shook the mountains in Sinai, and through the shaking of the mountains in Sinai, He shook the moral order of the world as He gave to humanity through His chosen people a Law. How good and great and wonderful a law it was is revealed in the fact that all modern civilizations have built their codes of ethics upon it. But in the fulness of time He came again, shaking that law, setting it at one side, sweeping away its ceremonial observances and symbolism, as He gave to the world the new moral ethic in the coming of His Son, and thus moved forward toward the final accomplishment of His will. He was working for the destruction of things which, having served their generation and His purpose in human history, might become, and, indeed, had become to some people, the very grave clothes that prevented their growth and advancement. Thus God is ever shaking to destroy the transient and to reveal the abiding, the things that are not shaken and which remain. The one Kingdom, which is His Kingdom; the one ideal, which is His ideal; the one law, which is the law of love; these are the things that are not shaken and cannot be shaken. In order that men may find them, turn back to them, God is forever shaking, disturbing. The things that are shaken are the things, either good or ill, which are transient. The things that are not shaken are the things that are eternal.

From that general attempt to understand the inner thought of the text, let us lift our eyes to the circumstances in the midst of which we live.

What are the things that are being shaken in the world today? Dynasties, thrones, national boundaries, international relationships. I might speak of all these. They are full of interest, but they are incidental and not essential. The insecurity of certain men upon their thrones, the change of the map of Europe in the matter of national boundaries, the new methods of international relationships; all these things are incidental, and I do not propose now to tarry with them. God has been shaking to their very foundations false conceptions of humanity, false methods in diplomacy, and false emphases in religion. In the understanding of these things, we shall at least gain some gleams of light revealing the need for constructive work.

False conceptions of humanity are being shaken to their very foundation. The first is that widespread conception which had mastered the whole of Europe - and more, of the world - which may be expressed in the statement that Humanity is self-sufficient. God has so dealt with us during this period of war that we are face to face with the fact of humanity's insufficiency as within itself to arrange its own course, or make its own plans, or conduct its own efforts to anything like success. We are being taught today that human cleverness is entirely at fault and that human strength at its uttermost is defeated. We are being taught this by the experience of our enemies and by our own. Everything of human cleverness has broken down. Every plan that was peculiarly of men, and peculiarly clever, has been smashed in the course of two years. The illustrations that come to us most readily are those of all the ingenuity and terrific cleverness and marvelous comprehensiveness of the thinking of the powers with which we are at war. Yet they made no single plan that has not already been wrecked so that it never can be realized. Then, when we think of ourselves, I wonder how far we are prepared to boast of our own cleverness. How have we been delivered? If it be true that there are gleams of light upon the eastern sky for us, if we are beginning to feel a greater sense of security, if in our hearts we feel a new day is coming, how has this all come about? If we have learned nothing else, surely we have seen our smug self-confidence rocked to the center by the hand of God. If we have not seen this, then we are blind indeed.

Is there not, however, another false conception of humanity that God is shaking? The idea was prevalent that humanity was hopelessly degenerate; the idea that everything that was essentially fine had gone; that there was nothing left in man to which any appeal on high and noble lines could be made. Are we prepared to say that today? Are prepared to say that for our own country as we look back? I confess I cannot altogether understand men who can look back over these two years without being made to think again in the presence of the quick and marvelous response to the high call, ringing out of the spiritual realm, that has characterized the going forth of our sons. Moreover, we have seen humanity able to endure the uttermost strain in its devotion to these high things. I am not saying for a single moment that anything that has happened in these two years is making any one of us think that we can do without Christ and His Cross. I will put the matter bluntly, as my own soul feels it when I say that as I look out upon these two years, I feel more than ever that His estimate of it is right, that it is worth dying for however much it may be bruised and weakened by the way. God is shaking us to the center, and so shaking these false conceptions of humanity.

Again, have we not seen, are we not living in the midst of the shaking of false methods in diplomacies? That is a great theme on which I dare not speak in detail. I speak as one who is looking out over the clouds and mists and trying to see clearly through any light that breaks through. Diplomacy has been conducted for many years under the inspiration of selfishness. Our phrases give us away. Here is one. Inferior races! That is a phrase we have heard in much of our diplomatic discussion, and because inferior races, they are to be mastered and managed, or let us tell the blunt truth for once, they are to be oppressed in the interest of the superior races. That has been the underlying inspiration of a great deal of diplomatic activity.

Or take another phrase that is not ours; we never made use of it although we did a good deal which seems to suggest that we believed in it. The superman! That means the right to conquer. These phrases reveal the inspirations of our arrangements. Our international plannings have been based upon the conceptions that there are such things as inferior races and supermen.

Where are we today? By the shaking of God we are coming at last to know that we have no right to speak of any race as inferior. We are at least beginning to think it is the superman who is inferior and that in every way.

Based upon these false conceptions, our methods have been the methods of cunning. The law of much diplomatic activity has been the law of outwitting someone else, quietly, secretly, no one other than the plotters knowing until it was done. God is shaking this to the very center, compelling us to a nobler way of thinking, bringing back to us words we have quoted day by day to our children but now applying them to national things and international:

The lip of truth shall be established forever:

But a lying tongue is but for a moment.

During these two years, false emphases in religion are being shaken to their very center. Our persistent and perpetual discussion of forms and media and channels is being challenged. We fight for the supremacy of some ecclesiastical form. The question of media has been considered more important than that of grace, and this has meant the destruction of the power of grace. One man says that grace comes through one media, and one man says it comes through another media. This man says that grace comes through certain forms and channels, another says that it does not come so, it comes directly. The matter of supreme import is not media. I believe that again and again grace is communicated to a man in connection with the laying on of hands. I believe that grace is found of some men through high ritual. But grace does not reach me that way. For the reception of grace into my own soul, I prefer the simplest place of meeting or the lonely quietness of some hillside. We of the opposing views concerning media quarrel with each other, and the result too often has been the destruction of grace!

Another false emphasis has been that of the finality of human opinion. We have been more concerned about formulae than about truth; about the things men say about truth rather than about the truth itself, and so truth has been hidden. God is shaking these things. But it seems to me that it takes a profounder earthquake to shake these things than any others. I see more evidences of hope as I look round on false conceptions of humanity, as I look round upon false methods of diplomacy, than I do in this realm of religion. Nevertheless, God is shaking to the very center these attitudes toward religion.

Are there any things that are not being shaken? There are, and they are the only things that matter. First, the relation of humanity to God is unshaken. He has the over-ruling of all human affairs. Take that map of yours and sit down and look at it, as it was, as it is, and, so far as you can, as it is going to be. Mark well the significance of what you see. Nation after nation is appearing before the bar of God and making its decision all unknowingly, and all unknowingly before that bar is receiving verdict and sentence. How many nations of Europe in these two years have chosen deliberately upon the basis of righteousness? How many nations of Europe within the last two years have chosen upon the basis of selfishness? I am not going to answer my questions. But this I say: God is judging. The nations have not escaped from the grip of God, and that impossibility of escape is the one hope of the dark hour.

The Lord still reigneth, and the fact of the reign of God is being demonstrated by the victories that faith has won. Take your eleventh chapter of Hebrews again. It is a wonderful chapter. I need not tell you that. The most wonderful part of the chapter is not that which gives names and shows us men, but the little brief sentences concerning the unknown heroes and the greatness of deeds. In the eleventh of Hebrews I find these words: "who through faith …. waxed mighty in war, …." That is what has happened during these two years. That is the story of the hour. How have these armies of Britain been raised? In that glorious response of the earlier days what was the inspiration? Did your sons go out to bring more territory to Britain? Never! Those armies would not have been raised to accomplish that end. Did they leave university and court and office and desk in order to give commercial supremacy to Britain? Never! They would never have gone for such reasons. They went for righteousness and truth. They went by faith in God, and by the victories that are being won at cost of suffering and sacrifice enough to break the heart, faith is being vindicated and so the relation of humanity to God is being proved. That is something that cannot be shaken.

The supremacy of righteousness and truth as a national foundation is unshaken. Nations built thereon cannot be destroyed. All other ground is sinking sand, As national policy also it is unshaken. Nations acting thereby pass through travail to triumph. All other policies are folly.

Finally, I find unshaken still the centrality of the Cross as the way of human salvation. To this all spiritual ministry agrees in spite of forms or opinions.

All over the world the story is coming to us of men going back to the Cross who thought the world had outgrown it or been mistaken about it. The Cross is also found to be the law of victorious life, not armies or munitions, but the spirit of sacrifice in the consecration of high devotion to righteousness. These are the unshaken things.

For every shaking of the earth the man of faith thanks God. Only the things which are not vital can be shaken; only the transient can be destroyed. The real things of life abide; faith, love, and hope. Through the shaking these are manifested. Or, as Haggai said, through the shaking the desirable things of all nations come, which means that by this shaking comes the desire of the nations which is Christ Himself. By these shakings He ever comes. He comes again to take the kingdoms to be His own. May He direct our hearts into that patient waiting for Him that is born of our sense that the shaking of all things is of God, and that only that which can be shaken can be destroyed.