The Forgotten Foundations of the Faith

“Christian Maturity”

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Hebrews 6:4-8

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Hebrews 6:9-12

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...the religious world little thinks whither its opinions are leading; and will not discover that it is adoring a mere abstract name or a vague creation of the mind for the Ever-living Son, till the defection of its members from the faith startle it, and teach it that the so-called religion of the heart, without orthodoxy of doctrine, is but the warmth of a corpse, real for a time, but sure to fail.

Cardinal J. H. Newman

HEBREWS 5:11-6:12

11 We have a great deal to say about this, and it is difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand. 12 Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God’s revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. 13 Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.

6 Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, faith in God, 2 teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And we will do this if God permits. 4 For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who tasted God’s good word and the powers of
the coming age, 6 and who have fallen away. This is because, to their own harm, they are recrucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt. 7 For the ground that drinks the rain that often falls on it and that produces vegetation useful to those for whom it is cultivated receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and about to be cursed, and at the end will be burned.

9 Even though we are speaking this way, dearly loved friends, in your case we are confident of things that are better and that pertain to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you demonstrated for his name by serving the saints—and by continuing to serve them. 11 Now we desire each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of your hope until the end, 12 so that you won’t become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance. (CSB)

1. WHAT MATURITY IS NOT.

2. WHAT IS NEEDED FOR REAL MATURITY?

3. WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE OF CHRISTIAN MATURITY?

Hebrews: 1-5:10 → (5:11-6:12) → 6:13-13

Expository → Hortatory (aiming to exhort) → Expository
The exhortation comprises four connected paragraphs:

(a) In 5:11–14 the author issues a call for an attentive hearing as he tells them that they are spiritually immature. Although they have been engaged in the Christian walk long enough now to be teachers of others, they show a dullness as learners of God’s truth.

(b) 6:1–3 is an exhortation to the listeners to correct their present course and move on to spiritual maturity. The challenge is expressed both positively (v. 1a) and negatively (vv. 1b–2), with a concluding statement of resolve (v. 3).

(c) 6:4–8 warns of the devastating consequences of apostasy. The author provides an extended rationale for pursuing the course proposed in 6:1–3. Where else can men and women go for repentance if they reject the only one who can provide true forgiveness of sins? The agricultural imagery of vv. 7–8 reinforces the negative message. Destruction is inevitable for those who are like unresponsive crops and do not produce good fruit.

(d) In 6:9–12 the author balances his severe warning with a word of encouragement that expresses confidence in his listeners. He expects that they will show the better things that are related to salvation. Their past works show that they love God and his people. What they need now is to overcome their laziness through diligence, and to imitate those who through faith and perseverance inherit God’s promises.1

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