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A Problem Peace Will Bring

"Like A Flint"

Thirty-odd years ago two young men graduated from one of our Southern High Schools. They were in the same class, came from the same social and economic background. They played on the same baseball team and got about the same grades in their class work. They both were Church members and attended Sunday School.

Today one of these men is a beloved minister in our Church, a man God has used in a special way as a personal worker and soul winner. The other man, the last we heard of him, had just been dismissed from his position as salesman in a liquor store because of excessive drinking on his part.

Why this great difference in the lives of these two men? Christian character is the answer. The first, as a boy, set his face like a flint to follow Christ, the second drifted with the tide.

Christian character means hardness; the right kind of hardness. Paul wrote to the young man, Timothy, "Thou therefore my son, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." But, Paul did not stop his admonition there; he continued, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

The Christian who seeks to float with the tide will not develop spiritual strength; it is the man who sets his face like a flint to swim against

the tide of doubt and unbelief who will develop strength to overcome and who, under God's hand will be used to win others to Him.

The tendency of recent years, at least, has been to, in increasing measure, and with ever less concealment of design, tear down that stalwart faith in God and His Word which makes spiritual giants. God has spoken, we are told, but His message is warped and handicapped by the human instruments thru which He spoke and we are sure of the general principles only, and even then they are open to various interpretations. Little wonder that today the Church, as a whole, is so powerless in its main work of saving the lost, and so active in social, economic and political reforms.

In our editorial entitled "Why?", in the first issue of the Journal last May, we said "We are unwilling to admit that a man has the right, in 'interpreting' the facts of Scripture, to eliminate them from the realm of fact and place them in the category of fiction or error. This is not interpretation but presumption at its worst."

To this position we again affirm our unyielding support. Let us, as members of a Church peculiarly blessed and used of God, but in which there are unquestionable evidences of willingness to float with the tide; let us, we plead, set our faces like flints to stand for the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Let our position be that of Paul of old who said, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Rom. 3:4.

—L.N.B.

Liaison With God

By Rev. Wm. C. Robinson, D.D.*

The war has brought a new word into our vocabulary, a word that is being greeted with numerous pronunciations. Liaison means contact. A liaison officer keeps the troops in contact with the commanding officer by means of telephone, code, radio, etc. In case the navy, air forces, tank, artillery, and infantry are cooperating in a task force the work of liaison is truly complicated. Dr. John Richardson has taken this same word, liaison, for an excellent little periodical which keeps the soldiers in contact with the Church and the Home. The most momentous use one can make of the term is to describe our relationship to God, for after all this is the primary relationship and the one upon which every other relation is built.

I. The Liaison Established

By The Creator.

When God made man He endowed him with knowledge, righteousness, holiness and dominion over the other creatures. As God made him, man was God's offspring, created in God's image that he might live in fellowship with and obedience to God. Thus could he think God's thoughts after Him, and re-interpret the universe which the Creator had pre-interpreted. When God walked in the garden, Adam came to share His fellowship and God rejoiced in the holy human pair, the crown of His creation. If man had continued in obedience to his Maker, this blessed liaison would have been made permanent, and the Holy City would have blessed this planet with its heavenly light.

II. Liaison Ruptured By Man's Sin.

However, an act of man breached this blessed harmony. By his own act of disobedience to God's revealed will man forfeited peace and fellowship with God. Sin alienated man from God. The third chapter of Genesis graphically portrays the double change which took place. The first change recorded is a change in man. Such a sense of shame and guilt filled his breast that he sought to cover himself with fig-leaves and to avoid the eye of his Holy Maker. Smitten by sin, man fled and hid himself from the presence of God amid the trees of the garden.

But the change in man was not the only change. Man not only sought to evade the presence of God; God drove out the man and placed the cherubim with a flaming sword to keep man from returning to Him in whose presence there is fullness of life. Thus we have a double change, a change of man's disposition toward God and a change of his relationship to God; and a double opposition, man's guilty opposition to God and God's holy opposition to man. Liaison has been broken, a state of enmity has replaced the garden of peace. War has been declared. Man is driven from the face of the Lord. First man disobeyed and hid from God, then God placed a veto against man's returning should he so desire.

In this condition no peace can ensue upon a mere change in man. Sin is not merely an illusion; guilt is not just an error in human thinking; the

righteous indignation of God is not a mere figment of human imagination; "that God possesses and exercises penal justice is a central idea of the faith of the Bible." Even pagan religions recognize that sin has alienated man from God and that something must be done to remove this estrangement. Only magic and ethnic religions teach that man must take the initiative and accomplish the reconciling process. A religion that declares man needs to be covered from the wrath of his Maker has not probed deeply enough man's desperate need. The half has not been told. Man must make expiation for his sins, but he cannot. Only God can. Herein is Christianity "the antipodes of all cults of human elaboration."

III. Liaison Re-established By Redemption.

The gate of re-access to God must be opened by Himself, otherwise we are undone. "The throne of the One and only Potentate can never be scaled by creaturely titans, be their crests ever so towering."

"God giveth no man quarter,
Yet God a means hath found,
Though faith and hope have vanished,
And even love grows dim,
A means whereby His banished
Be not expelled from Him."

All things are of God, reconciliation as truly as creation. In Christ God did for us what we could not do for ourselves and what we cannot do without. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

The third of Genesis describes the two awful changes that broke liaison with God, the third of John describes the two blessed "musts" by which God re-establishes liaison, by which through Christ the Father receives a lost sinner as a forgiven son. As there are two changes in Genesis, so Jesus tells Nicodemus that he needs two things to bring him back to God, an earthly and a heavenly change (III.12). "Ye must be born again." "The Son of Man must be lifted up."

The first need dealt with in John III is the first change noted in Genesis III. There man changed, here man must be changed, born again. This blessed change is wrought by the Holy Spirit, taking away the heart of stone and putting in a heart of flesh. As the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in a sinner's heart, that heart turns in faith to God in Christ as certainly as the sunflower turns to the sun. The new nature comes to the Saviour as freely as the hurt child runs to his mother. "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him, and he that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

This change which is first mentioned in John III is immediately connected by the Master with another change, another need. As the Holy Spirit deals with the earthly thing, the need of the human heart, so the Son deals with the heavenly thing, the objective relationship. This need is not met by a rebirth in man, but by a Cross endured for man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, God's gift, the Son of Man, came down from heaven that He might be lifted up and made sin for sinners, that those who believe might escape the judgment due to

them for sin. He was delivered up for our offenses, to die our death, to bear our sins in His own body on the tree.

There is an old story that King Zaleucus of the Locrians passed a law that anyone guilty of a certain grave offense should have both his eyes put out. One of the first offenders convicted was the king's own son. If Zaleucus were only a father he could forgive and forget. If he were only a king he could inflict and forget. He was a father and loved his son; he was a king and must do justice. Zaleucus solved the problem by having one of his own eyes and one of his son's eyes put out. Ever after the eyeless socket in the king's face testified to every observer both the greatness of the father's love and the sacredness of the king's law and justice. Of course, the analogy is not perfect. God, in the person of His Son, took our whole penalty and the stigmata of His passion attest to the universe His love and His justice.

"The Eternal Life, His life down laid,
Such was the wondrous plan;
And God, the blessed God, was made
A curse for cursed man."

The older evangelists used to illustrate what we have called liaison by two chairs. First the chairs are placed facing one another. Man as God made him enjoyed blessed communion and fellowship with his Maker. Man turned himself away from God, then because of sin God turned His face from man, put man away from His favour and fellowship. The chairs are reversed, stand back to back. Two changes are needed to bring them again into accord. The change in heavenly things, a change of status or relationship, a change objective to man, is called in the Bible reconciliation. The change in earthly things, in man's heart and disposition so that he will receive the atonement, believe on the uplifted Christ, is called regeneration. God is the active subject in making both of the changes. He turns one chair around by the gift of His only begotten Son to die for us men and for our salvation. We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Then, God turns the other chair around by the gift of the Holy Spirit to quicken our sin-deadened hearts. Man's sin was the cause of separation, God's great love at immeasurable cost, accomplishes the changes which bring us back into liaison with Himself. And the blessed Gospel which describes God's whole work of redemption is high us, in our mouths and in our hearts. It is the golden text of the Bible: For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

*Professor in Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Ga.

How sadly prone are men to call things by false names! Today, "Worldliness" is "being abreast of the age"; false doctrine is described as "Advanced thought." Indifference to truth is liberality, heresy is breadth of view. Yet names do not alter things. Call garlic perfume, and it remains a rank odour. Style the fiend an angel of light, and he is none the less a devil. Sin, call it by what names you may, is still evil, only evil, and that continually.

—Spurgeon.