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## Fraternal Obligations

By P. S. Henson, D. D.

Christianity alone can establish true fraternity. Obligation is based upon relationship and opportunity. As I have ability and opportunity, I am bound to do good to all men, for all men are my brothers. It behoves me to have regard to their material conditions and in this regard our gracious Master set the pace, for he ministered continually, not only to the spiritual, but the corporal needs of men, and through their bodies sought to reach and save their souls. For myself I have not a particle of confidence in those transcendental pietists who are so absorbed in star-gazing that they cannot see Lazarus lying at the gate, or in those sanctimonious priests and Levites who are in such hot haste to reach a religious conventicle up at Jerusalem that they leave a poor, half-dead mortal to perish by the roadside. Not that we are by blind benefactions to put a premium upon good-for-nothingness. Not that lazy drones are to subsist upon public charity, for God himself has expressly ordained that if a man will not work he shall not be allowed to eat. But I must see to it, if possible, that if he wants to work he shall have a chance to work.

Every church in a great city ought to have a labor bureau in connection with it, through whose agency provision might be made for willing hands to feed hungry mouths. I am not only under obligation to provide employment for my poor brother, if that be possible, but if I employ him I am bound to beware of taking advantage of his necessities and grinding him down to starvation wages that I may fatten on the profits of his toil. I may not, I dare not ever forget that my employe is my brother. And if by reason of adversity he be brought to destitution, I must see to it that he does not starve or lack for ministrations, even though his straightened circumstances be due to faults that he should have remedied. All of us by reason of our sins are in a pitiful plight before the Lord, but he does not upon that account utterly abandon us, nor must we abandon one another, but be like the Heavenly Father, who sends the rain and sunshine both on the evil and the good.

## An Answer to Prayer for Spiritual Blessing.

By Henry G. Weston.

**B**EFORE your department devoted to answers to prayer is closed, will you allow me to tell a story illustrating God's gracious answer to prayer for spiritual blessings.

In the largest church in the Association to which the church of which I was pastor belonged, difficulties, threatening for two or three years the dissolution of the church, finally culminated in the exclusion of twelve or fifteen of the members. The excluded persons called an *ex parte* council to convene the day preceding the next meeting of the Association. At the appointed time, the council met and organized. Extracts from the church records and all other necessary papers were on the table. I took the liberty of rising and saying that the work on which we were about to enter, that of sitting in judgment on brethren and appropriating the guilt of each party, was to me intolerably distasteful and could produce no good results. I said, "There is a path which the vulture's eye has not seen and the lion's whelps have not trodden;" would not our first session be better spent in prayer to God to show us the way? I

was the youngest member of the council, and I have always admired the spirit of the gray-haired moderator and other aged brethren in suffering a child to lead them. Without any objection or debate my suggestion was adopted, and the forenoon was spent in prayer. Before the time to which the Council adjourned had arrived the Association convened, and to my great surprise I was chosen Moderator, my first election to that office. The next day, the agents of the various benevolent societies presented their claims and collections were taken at the close of each address, amounting to eight or ten dollars apiece. There was no representative of the Foreign Mission cause present, and the brethren began to inquire if Foreign Missions were to be neglected. I answered, "Wait until the agents are gone, and we have the field all to ourselves." I had just come from the first meeting of the Missionary Union at Cincinnati, and was in some respects, like Elihu, the son of Baruch. Other speeches from members of the Association followed mine. To my great surprise and delight, the Spirit of God came down. Tears burst from eyes unused to weeping. One old gnarled sea captain, a veteran of the war of 1812, was suddenly hailed by one of the speakers—"Captain Crandall, remember the time when God spoke peace to your soul; down with your money on this table." Tears sprang from the eyes of the old man like water from the scuppers of the vessel he once commanded. When the session closed, one hundred and twenty-five dollars lay on the table, the largest collection in cash. I venture to say, that ever had been taken at any Association in Illinois. Remember we were few and poor.

The Council never met again. The church convened, rescinded the resolution of expulsion, and, as they were without a pastor, invited me to preach for them the next Sunday, and give the right hand of fellowship to the whole band of excluded brethren and sisters, which I did with all my heart.

In a history of the church now before me, published in 1857, I read: "In June, 1847, the Illinois River Association held its anniversary at Canton. This meeting was attended by the divine presence and blessing, and the counsels of those who were present on that occasion resulted in restoring harmony to the church, and installing a new era in its history. It will long be remembered with gratitude to God and the brethren who, under God, were made instrumental in restoring peace to Zion."

"It was not the counsels of those present," the parties on either side were in no mood to receive counsel; it was God's blessed love and mercy that banished the clouds and restored sunshine to the church. In that light it walked for many years, while its course was marked by special spiritual blessings in which I was permitted to share; they were precious to my soul and are among my most cherished memories.

## Enough Out and Brought In.

By REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

**M**ANY historical passages and personal incidents in the Bible illustrate great spiritual truths. For example, the narrative of the restoration of blind Bartimeus illustrates the process of conversion. The awakening sinner feels his need—prays for mercy—flings away his "garment" of sin—comes to Jesus—and the Holy Spirit does the regenerating work. There is a line in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy which describes the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt into Canaan by the Divine guidance: "He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in." That illustrates the out-bringing and the in-bringing of every genuine Christian.

First, there is a deliverance from the slavery and condemnation of sin by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. How constantly that expres-

sion occurs in the Pentateuch, "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The eighth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans is the believer's magnificent song of deliverance. There is therefore and thenceforth no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. He brought them out from darkness into light, out from death into life. No one can sing this "new song" unless Christ has accepted him, pardoned him, and made him free from the law of sin and death. John Wesley said that his first joyful sense of deliverance came when he realized the perfect security of every soul that is sheltered in the Saviour. I once visited the little room in London where this glorious light poured into Wesley's soul; it was the birthplace of Methodism.

Does this in-bringing imply a perfect freedom from temptation or the possibility of any lapse into sin? No indeed. The children of Israel had long marches, and severe discipline, ere the first foot stepped it to the promised land. Every converted soul must go in battle-harness, fighting every furling of the road to heaven. I suspect that the first moment of absolutely sinless perfection any of us will experience will be after the gates of the "Father's House" have shut us in. Perfect assurance never means perfect holiness. It means that Jesus Christ promises never to desert us. Is not that enough?

Conversion does not only bring a person out of an old position; it brings him or her into new practices. Conduct is the test of conversion. Old sins are renounced; old habits sloughed off; there is another hand at the helm as well as other colors at "the peak." When sharp Mr. A—begins to do business on the square; when stingy Mr. B—begins to send coal to the poor and gladly drop his "greenbacks" into the missionary plate; when church Mr. C—begins to treat his poor relations kindly; when gay young D—refuses to go to the theater, preferring to escort his good mother to the prayer-meeting; when godless Mr. E—sets up a family altar, there has been a new departure. There has been a bringing out of old ways, and a bringing into new practices; and if this continues, then Jesus Christ has been at work on those hearts. Conversion begins with first steps, sometimes very small steps; but if it is genuine, it does not stop there.

Vital and vigorous religion depends on a coming out of the old ways, and coming thoroughly and decidedly and fearlessly into the life of honest conformity to Christ. The secret of the feebleness and fruitlessness of thousands of church members is that they have never entirely broken with their former selves and their former sins. The soil of Egypt still sticks to their shoes, and the spirit of Egypt still lingers in their hearts. No man can serve two masters. "Come out and be ye separate" is Christ's clear command to every one who enrolls in his church. The Bible draws distinct lines; and no one can stand on both sides of the dividing line. On one side walks the Master, on the other drifts the worldling; and Christians need never expect to draw their frivolous fashion-loving unconverted neighbors over to Christ's side of the line by compromising. The moment that we walk one mile with worldlings they will compel us to "go with them twain." Egypt and Canaan lie in opposite directions. When Moses wanted to win Hobab he did not offer to stay with him; he said "come, go with us, and we will do thee good." That is the only way to win souls to Jesus.

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